

# *THE END OF ENCHANTMENT?*

CHILDHOOD REMEMBERED AND HYPERREALISED

*A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Women's  
Nostalgia in Aotearoa/New Zealand*

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree  
of

Doctor of Philosophy in Gender Studies

BY

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University of Canterbury

2002

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## Abstract

**Key words:** | women's nostalgia | New Zealand culture | hyperreality | symbolic exchange | phenomenology | gender analysis | Baudrillard

To apply critical cultural theory and gender analysis to life in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the last five years means recognising the changes wrought by the contemporary face of late capitalism including technoscience, global consumerism, the relentless plunder of natural resources and a process of deculturation in the interests of transnational markets. The purpose of this dissertation is to critique what discourses of nostalgia might tell us about women's lives in this context.

The research was initially motivated by the curious and disturbing observation that nostalgia, which to me signifies an experience of wholeness, intensity and spontaneity, seems either to denote the sentimental and rather demeaned longing for the past, or to be constituted in the banality of consumerism. Questioning whether this dissonance might in some way be linked to certain effects of 'postmodern' forms of social regulation, I have explored three interrelated foci: (1) the historical meanings of nostalgia within authoritative Western literature; (2) a qualitative, empirical research project generating narrative accounts of nostalgia from twenty New Zealand women born immediately following World War Two; (3) the critical potential of nostalgia to articulate salient psychocultural aspects of the lived experience of contemporary women's lives.

The methodology is grounded by Baudrillard's theoretical analysis, whereby the coded structure of late capitalism, underpinning value in both political economy and the linguistic sign is now understood to proliferate in hyperreal form. Grace's engagement with Baudrillard's theorisation as a basis for gender analysis crucially informs my reading of women's nostalgias in this context. Concomitantly, Rose's neo-Foucauldian and Spivak's postcolonial approaches are juxtaposed with a post-

phenomenological, semiotic reading, following Kristeva, Csordas and Alcoff. My resulting research metadiscourses, *Home*, *Homekilling* and *Homesickness*, emphasise the critical import of numerous embodied singularities informing women's situated knowledges of nostalgia.

The first substantive thesis resulting from this research is that nostalgia's maligned status is best read in Baudrillardian terms, where it echoes the ongoing preoccupation of the hyperreal West to obliterate residual cultural experiences concerning "symbolic exchange", as Baudrillard evokes this term. The three metadiscourses created here evoke the destructive effect of Westernisation upon forms of symbolic exchange that nurtured Maori and Pakeha girlhoods in the 1950s, by clarifying how opportunities to experience *jouissance* and ambivalence are today either gone forever, or intensely under threat.

The second, central and most important thesis claims that the haunting of hyperreal logic by remnants of individual women's memories of a once-experienced symbolic realm throws contemporary totalitarian systems into critical relief in important and unprecedented ways. The research participants metadiscourse of nostalgia reveals the deeply bewildering effects of evoking the intensity of a remembered sensation that can only be evoked because its very intensity is suppressed through being reduced to an icon and commodified. Accordingly, the women's nostalgic experience might also be read in terms predicated on Freud's explanation of the death drive generating what Kristeva calls the "melancholic-depressive" synthesis signalling the collapse of social connections, prior forms of communication and cultural reciprocity. It can be argued that this synthesis now characterises life in Aotearoa/New Zealand, but there is more to nostalgia than that.



The third thesis considers rethinking contemporary understandings of nostalgia in a way that avoids reliance upon the dichotomies underpinning globalising formulae, so that nostalgia is not able to be hyperrealised by higher order general systems. This expanded reading is substantiated by Kristeva's notion of 're-volt' and Baudrillard's 'ex-centric' practices, which would reconnect us with the innumerable singularities of symbolic exchange. The argument is that by rethinking nostalgia, we might generate ongoing critique of the quality of life under globalising systems and actualise reinvigorated psyches and bodies to offset processes of the virtual, robotic and hyperreal.

**DEDICATION:**

To my sons Darren and Justin Kemp of whom I am so proud.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without question my most significant debt in this project is to my supervisor at the University of Canterbury, Dr Victoria Grace. Her refreshing, rigorous and brilliant theorisation, the depth of her intellectual engagement with my work, her wisdom and generosity challenged and sustained me throughout the time of this dissertation. She has my deepest admiration and appreciation.

I am also indebted to Associate Professor Livia K. Wittmann for being an inspiring and brilliant teacher and model of scholarship. It was a great privilege to be her assistant researching Jewish women's identities, a project that sparked this present investigation. Her committed and comprehensive mentoring, supervision and encouragement were vital throughout my postgraduate years and the initial stages of this dissertation.

Also from the Gender Studies Department at the University of Canterbury, I so appreciate the wit of Dr Julie Wuthnow and Dr Nabila Jaber's teaching and thoughtfulness. Especially warm acknowledgement is due to Julie Duthie and Anna King for providing unstinting help in administrative matters, Denise Macrae for formatting and Pamela Gardiner for transcribing. The University of Canterbury Doctoral Scholarship was gratefully received for three years.

This dissertation emphasises the salience of memory and community. It would not have been possible without the contributions of the twenty research participants. My deepest gratitude: Anne, Chris, Denny, Diana, Dudda, Claude, Esther, Glenda, Helene, Kerry, Linda, Marie, Ruth, Sharon, Susan and "the beloved companions of my childhood": Beth, Hueline, Gail, Lucille and Pammy. Maggie, Heather, and Laura from Kaikohe, and Ruth Craighead, Sally McKay and Dale Yeoman from Blenheim kindly provided insights into the discourses of memory and childhood in this country.

Warm acknowledgement also goes to Kerei Anderson, Helene Leaf, and Dr Anne Phillips for their guidance regarding tikanga Maori: ka nui te aroha kia koutou.

From the realm of family and friendships that have sustained me in this project, I am so lucky to have parents of the calibre of Ruth and Alan Cederman, my sister Helen's wisdom and enthusiasm and the support of Bill Wick. Without my exceptional friendship with Sue Bridgen these years would not have been nearly as creative and exhilarating. I also acknowledge Heather Chapman and Dr Annie Stuart for their generosity, support and humour in the years I shared homes with each.

I must mention three of the many from Speech Language Therapy who have supported me: Dr Jean Seabrook my special mentor, Dr Patricia Champion who has shared many pivotal intellectual discussions with me, and Jan Ballin who makes me laugh. I am extremely privileged to have shared the pleasure of reading theory with Dr Daphne Manderson. I also owe particular thanks to Judith Dale from Victoria University for her belief in me and for reading my final draft with such meticulous care. The feminist arguments pursued with Associate Professor Pam Gerrish-Nunn, and with Ruth Margerison, are an important source of challenge. Others who must be singled out for acknowledgement are Marie Anderson, Lynne Bendall, Jann and Phil Collins, my cousin Christine Keay, my *yiddishe mamma* Miriam Millner, and environmentalist Margaret Peace. I honour too, my two visitors who arrived at crucial moments.

Most importantly, I acknowledge the strength and joy drawn from memories of my first playmate and companion, my cherished sister Lesley Dawn Collins. Her vivacity, courage and integrity not only delighted me throughout endless childhood summers and winters, fun, fights and challenges, but also have been with me throughout.

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## PREFACE: MY NOSTALGIA

### *My nostalgia*

*I feel the fiery volcanic earth puff up behind me as I run. I stop sharply at the totara tree searching for the exact cleft in the branches where I once peeled back the bark. I race the wind across sand and tumble in the pale, salty sea; I gasp with the rush and boom of breakers or crouch over the pool looking for cats-eyes. Us girls play huts and hunters in back-paddocks full of long tawny grass. We dive into clear and warm green rivers. Hiding, sneaking, we climb shed doors to spy on what's in there. We fly and jump off buildings and rock tremulously on ever-higher seesaws. We stealthily follow each other over grass reeking of sunlight, through bush to find the morepork's nest, then, squealing in our heads, slide down the sweet-smelling outer branches of the pines. We talk and laugh about God and the Devil, as we enter the unexpected rooms of a fallen macrocarpa. Then Mum calls wide across the sky. And we walk each other home on the little grass track, past the forbidden Maori cemetery, past the enormous vegetable garden and wired-up hen house - our words flying like sparks in the sunset.*

The preceding short text is an attempt to describe how I experience nostalgia.

As closely as I can relate it, such experience seems to move me to and fro in time and space to a place that I suddenly and spontaneously revisit. Julia Kristeva touches upon this surreptitiousness when she calls it “not a past, but a malleable immanence that never stops developing, however secretly” (1996: 137).

My own nostalgic experiences seem to form a time and place of value, wholeness, belonging and enjoyment, where the predominant sense is of life having meaning. Such experiences of my girl-childhood are often how I make sense of the most important values, attitudes and behaviours informing how I understand my life today. In my nostalgia, contemporary identities and particular histories are suspended to make room for a fleeting, passionate and enriching encounter with my childhood. From first hand accounts, the nostalgic recollections of other women I knew in my

childhood also reiterate a beautiful and embodied (albeit culturally specific) space. For us, nostalgia seems to be as life enhancing, as it is ubiquitous and compelling.

What else might be said about my own nostalgic text? The framing narrative propels the reader forward in pursuit of a richly contoured world where ‘I’ experience mischief, adventure and fun. More than this, in the experience of rethinking and rewriting (of re-membling) I feel the immersion in activity and movement; I am moving, my senses are heightened, life is vividly coloured, and there is a sense of wonder at the landscape.

In this nostalgic realm there are trees with branches, the earth, rivers, the sea, cats-eyes, paddocks, grass, bush, and the sky. Less ‘natural’ elements include a shed, some buildings, track, vegetable garden and hen house, a home and a cemetery. Apart from the child, the other people in this world are “us girls” (a phrase situating the reader in the language of childhood), and Mum, the lone voice of authority. There are other less directly audible authoritative voices however, rendered even more formidable in their absence: Dad who tends the veggie garden, God, the Devil, and, at the boundaries, the spirits dwelling in the most forbidden *tapu* place, the *urupa* (cemetery).

While amplifying movement this text conveys a very real sense of specificity, conveying both immediacy and the extended passage of time towards the end of an imagined day. By condensing time so solidly, activities that might have happened sporadically - days, weeks, or even years apart - are compressed into what seems to be one twelve hour period. There is a morning, where the reader enters the nostalgic scene and then moves sequentially, amidst places of water and wonder, in interaction with the landscape and out into the world. About a third of the way through the text “I” becomes “we”, there is more action and the sound of word play concerning God

and the Devil. Then we move closer to home, closer to the bountiful garden and henhouse. The maternal voice draws us home; we are twilight companions venturing down the track that bounds the feared graveyard.

In this short narrative there is a blurring of humanness and landscape, just as for the reader there is a blurring of the past and a present-day sense of how this text might be read today. For me, this includes the awareness that my childhood friends are over fifty years old now and most of them would have trouble climbing pine trees. I am aware of how the fields we move in are now often electromagnetic. Rather than running and gasping with wonder in tune with the landscape, we now move from car to mall to computer, from phone to fax to television. Today access to the outdoors, and freely onto farms is restricted. If we do engage with nature by walking along a country road we gasp rather in response to diesel fumes. Our bodies are highly regulated within economic, technological, medical and scientific discourses and those of consumerism and controlled leisure. Given signification within these discourses, we have become the global subject of technoscience, reflecting what Donna Haraway called (1997: 126) “a potent form of historical, contingent, specific human nature at the end of the millennium”.

Mum still calls me “wide against the sky” but today it is on Telecom, a perpetual reminder of the ways in which transnational corporations have reconfigured countries like New Zealand. I now know that the presence of a Maori cemetery in the middle of that state housing areas represents five generations of Maori grievance over Maori displacement. Environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources now threaten the ‘paradise’ of bush, sea, beach and river. I know that Pakeha girls, like myself, are more likely to have become ‘rich’, while Maori girls are more likely to have remained ‘poor’, either living in more isolated conditions, or

bearing the brunt of restructuring procedures that eat away any commitment to social responsibility. I know that violent crime renders back-paddocks no longer safe for girls.

In the 1960s, like other New Zealand women of European ancestry, I might have read this with a sense of being the ‘homeless’ product of a mixture of somehow silenced German, Jewish, Swedish, Scots and Welsh descent. I might have compared myself with Maori, who seemed to know who they were and where they belonged. “They know what river gave them birth, what mountain suckled them” I lugubriously wrote as a teenager in 1958 as I mourned the sense that I did not authentically belong in this land. I suppose such a search for ethnic origins was informed by an awareness of the existential homelessness felt as a teenager in that era when the term ‘teens’ first denoted a distinctive marketing category. The post-war period was a time when New Zealand culture valued its citizens according to how near one accorded with English masculinity. Like Sandra Coney (1997) I felt my own reality become dissonant with the realisation that I was a weak girl in a phallocentric culture, and moreover that I spoke in speech patterns designating that I was not from England. To me then, the word *Pakeha* meant *pa* flea and was seldom heard.<sup>1</sup> When it came to be heard in the 1960s, the term designated the seedlings of a New Zealand nationalism that soon generated an economically induced break away from Great Britain. It simultaneously signified the nascent Maori nationalism that accompanied the increasing urbanisation of Maori.

Twenty years ago, in the 1970s or ‘80s in New Zealand, I might have read my nostalgic text according to the historical influences and identifications that constituted second wave feminism. I might have made a radical or essentialist feminist reading, describing a subversive world of “primary intensity between and among women”

(Rich 1980: 648). Feminist scholarship from the seventies tends to focus on how narratives represent the 'selfhood' of the child/woman, by attempting to reclaim for her a 'true self' that will be in time self-acting and self-respecting. The mother calling might have been understood to deny reconciliation with the Father by reaffirming one's original birth, and maternal (original) source, movement and surge of living. Mary Daly was one of many feminist theologians who exhorted women to find our original integrity by remembering our 'selves' (1978: 39).

It is in the wake of these reflections that I approach the world of childhood remembered. I do not repeat the common understanding of nostalgia as a sentimental longing for the past. In my own nostalgia there is more joy than sadness, more information than sentiment, and an intensely poetic, yet tangible connection to people, politics and places, which still resonates between the girl who is my past self, and the woman doing the remembering today. My curiosity is to address what it might mean to have these feelings for girlhood that cut into everyday life. What might their very intensity and urgency reflect? Why is there an almost sacred responsibility to record these feelings of sheer enjoyment and movement? More pointedly, how might nostalgia best be read in the interests of contemporary cultural critique and feminist scholarship?

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## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Joan Metge translates Pakeha as "Persons of European descent, more especially those born and/or brought up in New Zealand" (1967: 343). The Maori term "pa" is used colloquially today to mean "an unfortified Maori settlement or village" (p. 342).



## INTRODUCTION

Nostalgia is definitely not what it used to be. I argue in fact, that contemporary nostalgia now reflects an unprecedented and illusory ontology. Now the dynamics underpinning nostalgia not only override our sense of reality but also neutralise critical inquiry. It is the contention of this dissertation however that these dynamics constitute a disturbing phenomenon requiring scholarly investigation and critique.

There was a time in the late seventeenth century when nostalgia – from *nostos* (return home) and *algos* (pain) – was taken seriously and described “a clinical syndrome” (Jackson 1986: 373). In modernity, nostalgia was ‘interiorised’ to denote the psychological subject longing for its object which was the impossible return to the *jouissance* of the maternal womb. Nostalgia was also a disparaged discourse reflecting “a useless yearning for a world or a way of life from which one has been irrevocably severed” (Starobinski 1966: 101). This pejorative denotation continues to be reflected in more recent psychiatric literature where nostalgia is called “a condition noxious to mental health” (Beiser and Hyman 1977: 1001).

My claim that such nostalgia is disturbingly changed in the contemporary world is explored in relation to Jean Baudrillard’s important contemporary commentary. Baudrillard theorises that the mass media, information technology and globalisation have now operationalised the implosion of the binaries of modernity so that every term is ‘positivised’ and hyper-realised. In other words nostalgia today is the product of hyperreality. Generated through technology, the media, consumerism and the “analytic metadiscourses” (Baudrillard 1997: 125) hyperreality generates such discourses of the ‘self’ characterised by a spectrum of values of consumerism and neo-individualism. In



contemporary western democracies such as Aotearoa/New Zealand, these dynamics are enmeshed within a liberal social, economic and political framework where the language of passive consumption and indifference, ‘identity’ and ‘difference’, seems to have grown in proportion to the absence of real differences.

Nostalgia never was held in the same esteem as other expressions of the ‘interior self’ such as memory, memoir or autobiography but now the childhood it reflects is as prized for regurgitation by televisual and mediatised interests as those childhoods seized upon by therapeutic discourse. The psycho-medical concept of a form of homesickness seems to have been lost entirely as nostalgia has picked up new signification in the ‘postmodern’ milieu.<sup>1</sup> Wander into any shopping mall or surf the web, visit an interactive museum or flick the channels and there are inevitably nostalgic autobiographies about various childhoods, traditional furnishings, Kiwiana, 1960’s music, radio programmes that ask about the childhoods of Maori and Pakeha, retrospective clothing styles, cars, art, theatre and film. By revivifying the past and reconstituting the very stuff of memory and imagination, the familiar forms of nostalgia seem to enable people to realise what previously could only be rather hopelessly yearned for. Nostalgic fluidity, depthlessness and multiplicity promise access to the pleasures from which one was irrevocably severed. I contend however that postmodern nostalgic discourses — in art, culture, scholarship and lifestyle — echo no more than the banality of consumerism where differences proliferate in order that the taxidermic revivification of memories is marketed with the greatest possible precision.

To explore and contextualise the changes in nostalgia means considering the wider context of westernisation. It means engaging with a body of academic literature

that observes how the mechanisms of western culture constitute certain sectors of humanity as rejected, redundant, invisible – or ‘homesick’? Such literature critiques the vast reach of global consumerism, instant telecommunications and the technologies of virtual reality and transglobal exchange. Other themes relate to the particular cultural forms generated by borderless markets and immigrant shipments and dislocations, together with new ways of producing and shifting commodities. Serge Latouche lists the rapacious Eurocentric qualities regulating this drive to global uniformity in strongly critical terms which include “economic war, unlimited pillage of nature, the Westernisation of the world and total planetary uniformity, the genocide and ethnocide of all other cultures” (Latouche 1996: xiv).

A feminist counterpart to this analysis heightens unease about the liquidation of cultures by charting how the contemporary social world presently defines and affects women’s lives. According to Zillah Eisenstein: “Transnational capital patriarchy, as a series of economic, sexual and racial relationships, attempts to rationalise and modernise traditional patriarchal hierarchy” (1998:135). Elaine Showalter identifies a contemporary hysteria, in what she calls the cultural narratives of “therapeutic investments, sickness lifestyles and emotional hystories” (1997: 5). Other feminist theorists, and indeed many other commentators position contemporary women as abused and oppressed victims, or out of control, or mourning and protesting “the social meaning of the female body” (Grosz 1994: 40). Others of course contest this very positioning as ideologically manipulative (de Ras 1997: 121).

Donna Haraway specifically confronts the situation now facing women as humanity is irrevocably altered by and through engagement with scientific and

technological systems. She writes that “[t]he interesting epistemological, emotional, political position is from the point of view of those who must live in relation to systems of commensurability that cannot be theirs, ever” (p.55). Haraway offers a particularly persuasive representation of current apocalyptic ‘reality’ by addressing the plight of girls. Her stark reading of Lynn Randolph’s painting *Millennial Children* forms an apocalyptic antithesis to nostalgic discourses of childhood.<sup>2</sup> This text underlines the malleable nature of nostalgia. Not only does Haraway gain rhetorical force by generating assumptions about how a catastrophic childhood environment might look, but she also demands a reading that juxtaposes the thoughts and reality of another, more healthy and fitting, environment. Thus it might be claimed that personal nostalgic text, such as my own represented in the Preface, presupposes a stable, common referent by which to measure its very enchantment.<sup>3</sup> In a circular way, Haraway establishes the potential of childhood nostalgia to act as a critique of our present-day environment.

Susan Sontag’s claim is even more direct. “That even an apocalypse can be made to seem part of the ordinary horizon of expectation constitutes an unparalleled violence that is being done to our sense of reality, our humanity” (1988: 93). By equating “our humanity” with “our sense of reality”, Sontag directs the reader to consider the salience of the current breakdown of traditional and conventional forms of referentiality. She is signalling a critical dimension where it is vital to consider Baudrillard’s critique of the immutable challenge to reality that has occurred over the last twenty years. His claim is that reality itself is now to be read as the catastrophic effect of simulation. This is because the technological manipulation and mediation of meaning and reality have profoundly affected our perceptions of time and space: there is no longer the ability for us to confront

how 'reality' itself has been altered. Baudrillard's claim is predicated on how westernisation and the techno-commodification of the social order have destroyed the Enlightenment distinction between an object and its representation, itself a mode of establishing subject and object that Baudrillard situates and critiques.

This distinction has been substituted with what Baudrillard calls the hyperreal world of simulation. Humanity has thus left the referential world of the real, and of history, and moved into a realm where simulated value has replaced prior values of nature, commodity and sign. The concept of hyperreality also stresses how the heterogeneity of human life now is configured and valued as infinite iterations of the same. As real differences of all sorts merge within the techno-structures of current social and economic organisation, these very differences become profoundly important as they are endlessly regurgitated in the interests of the market.

Following this critique of the dynamics of society pioneered by Baudrillard, we can say that the loss of referent accompanying the flotation of value and signification means that the reference point for reality is displaced and we now have a hyperrealised 'real' that is more real than any natural, or material real. This results in a symptom and effect of the western world where, "power, meaning and reality are illusory" (Grace 2000: 192). More of the same endlessly proliferates and individuals are figured as passive, moribund consumers.

What Baudrillard perceives as distinctive however, is something which he describes as a contemporary form of pluralistic, heterogenous or 'postmodern' nostalgia, the attempt to conserve what is lost forever by refurbishing tradition as heritage, by rehabilitating old structures and values, and by reviving vanishing forms (1996: 117-8).

But “their resurrection is itself hyperreal” (p.117). In his view, these nostalgias merely lock the stable door after the horse has bolted:

The traces of dinosaurs howl in our memories. Had they been alive we would have exterminated them, but we respect their traces. It is the same with the human race, the more we imperil it, the more meticulously we preserve its remains (Baudrillard 1997: 56).

Thus, nostalgia signifies the futile preservation of what is already lost, suggests that the more prolific the nostalgia, the more desperate is the warning that humanity itself is endangered. In this light, it seems that western nations, and this includes Aotearoa/New Zealand, are mourning what Bryan Turner calls “a lost space and a lost time from which contemporary social systems can be measured and found wanting” (1987: 150).

Where does this leave my prefaced experience of nostalgia as an embodied thing? How might the remembered qualities of wholeness, intensity and immediacy constructed in this girlhood imaginative space be read in juxtaposition to hyperrealised nostalgias? In this thesis I investigate women’s nostalgias in particular in the context where simulated social forms of reality are allied with incommensurability, emptiness, anxiety, and saturated systems. To reflect contemporary female nostalgia in this country, I chose to collect interviews from women who were the most likely to generate the nostalgia I understood most closely, meaning that they were of the same generation as myself. This process mirrored the insights I gained into nostalgia from my experiences when I joined with five women friends on Waiheke Island to celebrate turning fifty. This reunion produced fascinating insights about how their nostalgias dovetailed with mine in significant ways. This group of five friends would ultimately give me a base from which to explore nostalgia, but another fifteen voices of post-war baby boomers intensify and diversify the investigation.

The choice of baby boomers addresses the wider concerns of the research because this is my generation and the first generation interpellated within the realm of post-World War Two second-wave feminism. As psychosocial categorisations of identity emphasise, one's generation is a crucial identity marker. By interviewing women born immediately after the World War Two, I situate the data in a specific historical period that proceeds from our births – at the dawning of the nuclear age – to the present day, when our nostalgia is presently experienced. This time span coincides with the trajectory of development of the twin icons of modernity, consumerism and globalisation. By scoping New Zealand nostalgia over a fifty-year period of time, I stress the links between global politics, the economic order, the more intimate constructions of nostalgia and the temporal framework in which these occur.

In a manner similar to Foucault's, the general progression of this work investigates "how and why certain things (behaviours, phenomena, processes) became a problem" (Foucault 1988: 16). Here the overriding problematic will be to discover what nostalgic discourse might reveal about the totalising phallocentrism regulating women's lived experience in the consumerist west, with its corollary, the "genocide and ethnocide of all other cultures" (Latouche 1996: xiv).

## **Key Concepts and Questions**

The ensuing dissertation explores three foci. Initially there is an exploration of the historical construction of nostalgia within authoritative western literatures. That is followed by critical epistemology designed to investigate narrative of women's nostalgia in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Finally, I give a developed consideration of the potential of

nostalgia to critique the lived experience of New Zealand women's lives in the contemporary milieu.

The foci are investigated primarily by drawing upon Baudrillard's cultural critique – and Grace's exegesis of it – of the coded logic of value underpinning both the political economy and the linguistic sign. I also investigate the claims of contemporary theorists of nostalgia like Fred Davis, David Lowenthal, A.K. Ankersmit and Mike Featherstone, as well as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Elspeth Probyn, Debora Battaglia and Marilyn Strathern who have generated approaches to gender and postcoloniality that complement my work. The contemporary texts are augmented by readings investigating some salient historical texts which might have given meaning to nostalgia. Ancient and seventeenth century nostalgias and the Freudian explanation of nostalgia are given semiotic, neo-Foucauldian readings because I claim such analysis exposes the dualistic logic upon which late-capitalism is premised.

It is crucial to recognise that any discussion of nostalgia reflects a specific convergence of race and gender, and that the implementation of this research confronts important issues of representation and ethical consideration. Exposing racially constituted categories gives rise to knowledge about how cultural practices not only inculcate specific gendered injunctions, but also secure the boundaries of racial distinction (Butler 1995: 118). Such theorising stresses the ethical and pedagogical significance of precisely idiosyncratic research as a means of exploring the disarray<sup>4</sup> of western culture. The westernisation of Aotearoa/New Zealand is investigated through analysis drawing upon Baudrillard's concept of "symbolic exchange", which critiques the ontology, axiology

and semiology dictating how Maori were ‘othered’ in order to constitute white identity and generate the naturalness and superiority of the settler culture and world view.

## **Rationale for Gender Analysis**

This inquiry specifically seeks to investigate a gendered understanding of nostalgia in a world where, it is argued, the systems of late-capitalism generate social relationships that especially damage the well being of women and girls. My project follows Grace in drawing attention to feminist poststructural and postcolonial theory that is founded on, and presently deeply imbricated in, deconstructing gender or ethnic identity, sexual or racial difference. The analysis undertaken here is more concerned to question the very epistemologies and ontologies informing these ways of thinking about ‘lives’, ‘identities’ and ‘differences’.

There is no doubt that the field of poststructural feminist theory is rigorous in devising ways to deconstruct phallogocentric binaries, as well as thinking about new ways to reconceptualise ‘the female subject’. Such theorists tend to conceptualise female subjectivity as multiple, diverse, embodied, and performatively and normatively constituted. For example, Luce Irigaray’s (1977) construction of the feminine is premised on touch and focuses on the “two lips” that metaphorically privilege the female body, while defining the other within the self: “Within herself, she is already two – but not divisible into one(s) - that caress each other” (1977: 24). Elizabeth Grosz (1994; 1995) acknowledges her own “driving model” is the Mobius strip, which she uses to describe both the mind/body relation (1994) and permutations of sexual pleasure. She specifically cites Alphonso Lingis’ description: “Feeling one’s way across the outer face of this



Möbius strip one finds oneself on the inner face - all surface still and not inwardness” (Grosz 1995: 183). Judith Butler’s (1997) trope to explain subjectivity is of the psyche turning on itself, so that the explanation of an internalised emotion such as nostalgia (although she talks about melancholia) “participates in the mechanism it describes” (1997: 4). Elspeth Probyn (1993) draws on Deleuze’s reading of Foucault and the metaphor of the ‘pleat’ to define the line of power constituting subjectification. The act of pleating, folding or doubling up refolds and bends the line of the outside to create the inside/outside and to constitute a self that is impossible to condense into a unified self. A bending of the outside, stretching and folding, enables the self to relate not only to the self and others, but “scrambles any dichotomy of interior self and exterior social” (1993: 130).

These permutations of internal/external, mind/body, self/social morphologies, hierarchies and topographies do indeed “scramble” the subject, and subjectivity. It is also undeniable that the “lips”, the “turn”, “Möbius strip” and “pleat” are all intellectually compelling figures that enrich the postmodern repertoire, and rework the limits and stasis of traditional metaphysical dualism. But, as Grace (2000) so strongly asserts, the poststructural predilection for deconstructing subjectivities is patently hollow in the contemporary milieu. She endorses Baudrillard’s objection to poststructural readings of ‘gender identity’, ‘sexual difference’ and ‘subjectivity’ that ignore the coded status of economic value together with structures of signification.

What Baudrillard’s analysis forces us to consider is that this structure cannot be understood only in semiological and psychoanalytic terms, nor can it be confronted only in terms of deconstruction, reinventing language, and reconfiguring the unconscious, by whatever means. These latter strategies are blind to the role of the code, to the role of the economic structuration of that codification in sustaining and reproducing this binary logic.... Gender identity and sexuality in the modern era of the west are, in Baudrillard’s analysis, predicated on the relentless instantiation of the mythic finality of a phallic

exchange standard to accomplish the parallel task of establishing who or what one is or is not the same as or different from.... the presence or absence of biological organs which form a naturalised alibi for the institution of a massive cultural ideology: in Baudrillard's terms, the phallic exchange standard.... 'the Phallus becoming the absolute signifier around which all erogenous possibilities come to be measured, arranged, abstracted, and become equivalent' (Grace 2000: 38-9).

By stressing the significance of the ontological specificity of "woman" and woman's sexuality, the poststructural position, fundamentally, and despite political feminist attempts at subversion, always institutes essentialist and phallogentric ontology premised on the binary logic of a phallic exchange standard (p.45). As Grace claims, "to assert the ontological necessity of a positive presence, involves the assumption of an essence" (p.45). She is critical of a "strategic essentialism" and calls attention to how "one's passionate advocacy of a particular political action or challenge is incumbent on one's situatedness, position, locatedness, which is not to be confused with 'identity'" (2000: 78). In keeping with this argument, the deconstruction of positive and negative poles that structure gendered and racialised forms of oppositional politics do not make sense today, because hyperreality now captures all of the polarities of the system – including those of sexual identity and difference – and regurgitates them in accordance with the phallic exchange standard.

In terms of its wider application, no literature in any field applies critical analysis to women's nostalgia in Aotearoa/New Zealand today. Consequently, this investigation makes a critical, qualitative and conceptual contribution to contemporary socio-cultural critique. It has the potential not only to shed light on the totalitarianism that stands for socio-cultural life today, but also to facilitate scrutiny of the psyches and bodies so constituted.

## Organisation

This dissertation is divided into three Parts. Part One comprises the introduction, literature review and methodology. Part Two contains analysis of historical nostalgic literature and Part Three concerns the generation and analysis of women's nostalgia in contemporary New Zealand.

Thus, Part One provides a background to the research topic, situates this topic within the relevant field(s) of literature, and discusses issues of methodology; specifically, Chapter One introduces literature theorising nostalgia from the field of contemporary social theory, Chapter Two focuses exclusively on a range of feminist readings of nostalgia, and Chapter Three concerns the methodology upon which the research is predicated.

In accordance with that methodology, Part Two begins with an analytic discussion of historical nostalgic literature. Chapter Four addresses nostalgic constructions in the ancient world. Chapter Five is concerned with the medicalisation of homesickness in the seventeenth century, while Chapter Six deconstructs psychoanalytic nostalgia.

Chapter Seven introduces Part Three by grounding the New Zealand component of the research. In this chapter, we find readings of some modern and late-capitalist forms of New Zealand nostalgia. Chapter Eight gives consideration to the specific methods of generating the qualitative research data, and focuses on the recruitment of participants, the collection of data and its preliminary analysis. Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven

provide an analysis of the metadiscourses of nostalgia in the specific transcribed narratives of the women participants.

The final chapter, Chapter Twelve, revisits the research questions and reflects on conclusions that might be made on the basis of the analysis. These concern the status of nostalgia, the gendered nature of this practice and a specific reading of women's nostalgia that addresses its critical potential. In keeping with this outline, the next chapter reviews contemporary nostalgic literature, which supplies many of the key ideas sustaining this project.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Following Baudrillard the term 'postmodern' is placed in single quotation marks to indicate that the word does not signal the critical approach to modernity it tends to purport, but instead reflects the current techno-commodification of modern forms of sociality. Single quotation marks throughout indicate that I am not using the particular word at face value but that it is meta-reflection. Double quotation marks indicate direct quotations.

<sup>2</sup> This reflection of an imperilled and polluted environment renders Haraway's text implicitly nostalgic:  
 Stalked by hyenas and mocked by a dancing clown-devil with a leering death mask for a stomach,  
 two embracing girls kneel on the flaming ground outside the burning city of Houston on the banks  
 of an oil-polluted bayou. Facing the viewer, these millennial children ask if there can still be a  
 future on this earth (Haraway: 1997:40).

<sup>3</sup> Certainly there are implications in exploring knowledge systems across time, in seeing the future, or past, in the present. Randolph and Haraway's representation of the voices of the pictured girls in Haraway's text is like any other system of representation, illusory. As Luce Irigaray says in her critique of Plato's representation of Diotima, "[s]he is not there. She herself does not speak. Socrates reports or recounts her views. He borrows her wisdom and power" (1989: 65).

<sup>4</sup> Baudrillard uses the term "disarray" to describe how White culture is specifically "overwhelmed by an ancient torpor and [are] now succumbing little by little to the grip of 'dreamtime'" (1997: 138).

## PART ONE

### CHAPTER ONE: KEY LITERATURES AND CONCEPTS

It is because we are moving further away from our history that we are avid for signs of the past, not, by any means, in order to resuscitate them, but to fill up the empty space of our memories (Baudrillard 1994: 74)

This chapter engages with literature selected for its central theoretical issues and debate concerning nostalgia within the fields of history, socio-psychology and critical theory. I argue that whereas the former disciplines tend to individualise nostalgia and finally neutralise what it might tell us about cultural processes, the latter, critical theory, succeeds in revealing nostalgia's potential as an invaluable focus of analysis. Insights from the work of Kristeva and Baudrillard are particularly relevant because of their appraisal of the juncture of nostalgia and late-capitalism.

#### Reaffirming Identities

The first two texts situate nostalgia amidst problems resulting from social change. One's relationship with the past is understood in terms of psychological identity, a formulation that is more a reflection of ego-psychology than of Freudian psychoanalysis. This generates the 'self' of humanist psychology, and individualises nostalgia through forms of classification where the calibration and recording of nostalgic behaviours locate nostalgia within the paradigms of such a self. Sociologist Fred Davis' text *A Yearning for Yesterday: a sociology of nostalgia*, and historian David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country*, are both written around the 1980s.

In Davis' text (1979) psychological concepts of identity support the concept of "a sociology of nostalgia" that, he argues, explores links between nostalgia and identity and the connections nostalgia makes between the past, present and future.

Nostalgia, according to Davis, is not only “deeply implicated in the sense of who we are” but “is one of the more readily accessible psychological lenses we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities” (1979: 31).

Drawing upon notions of identity from Anselm Strauss (1959) and Erik H. Erikson (1959), Davis highlights the categories of discontinuity and continuity, binaries that form “one of the dominant dialectics of Western thought” (p.32). For Davis, personal identity or ‘the self’ is synonymous with “the person, his or her being, self-image, and distinct aura of lived separateness in the world” (p.32-3). He argues that nostalgia reinforces conservatism, continuity, sameness and reassurance, notably amidst times of fear, insecurity, discontinuity, anxieties or uncertainties.

There are, in this argument, three ways in which nostalgia leads to ‘continuity’ of identity:

Firstly, in what he calls “Nostalgia’s Cultivation of Appreciative Stances Towards Former Selves”, people want to think well of who they were to make the present less frightening. In this view, by seeing themselves as lovable and worthy in their nostalgia people can imagine they remain so despite the problems of the present (p.39).

Secondly, in “Nostalgia’s Muting of the Negative”, the individual eliminates the sad, shameful, guilty and unpleasant memories. Continuity of identity is enhanced in this action “by reassuring the now self that it is ‘as it was then’: deserving, qualified, and fully capable of surmounting the fears and uncertainties that lie ahead” (p.39).

Thirdly, as “The Dialogue of Rediscovering a Secret Self”, Davis cites Riesman (1954), and Goffman (1961) to talk about the nostalgia that assists in mediation by the ‘small quiet voice within us,’ when authorities attempt to comprehend and regulate behaviour. Nostalgia argues Davis focuses on what was unique about our individual past self, ‘the “strange,” private, the ‘offbeat, marginal, odd, different, and secret’ facets (p.41).

Again, the answer seems to lie not so much with what actually may have been unique about our pasts as it has to do with nostalgia’s abiding involvement with the existential problems of continuity of identity in the face of new demands, with assimilating the inevitable alterations in relationships occasioned by our destined passage through the life cycle, and, more diffusely, with calming the disquietude aroused by almost any alteration in one or other of our many statuses, particularly with those occupational and familial roles that are deeply imbricated in our core sense of self (Davis 1979: 41).

For Davis, the nostalgia one might experience for prior times when one felt different (lovable and worthy) serves to normalise us by rehabilitating marginal, fugitive and eccentric facets. And so nostalgia is a process of “radical condensation”, that “erects benchmarks”, or it is “a capacity to locate in memory an earlier version of the self with which to measure to advantage some current condition of the self” (p. 45).

Davis goes on to argue for what he explains as the psychological authenticity of nostalgic images, claims and conclusions. To explicate this, he differentiates nostalgia from fantasy and dreaming, arguing that the tragedy of nostalgia is that it can only draw from the meagre materials provided by one’s own past existence, and cannot add anything that was not there. In this way, nostalgia “retains the accent, if not the verisimilitude, of past reality” by giving us “the imaginative means for better reconciling past being with present circumstance” (p.48).

Consequent to Davis’ argumentation, we might claim that nostalgia generates the dichotomies of psychological discourse: of past and present selves, then and now, continuity and discontinuity, negative and positive, internal and external, memory and currency, nostalgia and fantasy. In this view, the world of continuous change, of fear, problems, uncertainty, disquietude, new demands, and alterations in relationships and status, formulates nostalgia as the inner space sustaining the sense of continuity and reconciliation that facilitates adaptation to a troubled environment.

Lowenthal (1985) draws on Davis to also affirm that the past is integral to one’s sense of identity, since “identification with earlier stages of one’s life is crucial both to integrity and to well being” (p.42). Lowenthal too utilises the binaries of continuity and discontinuity; for example he suggests that discontinuity in a cultural context compels settler societies to romanticise homelands or assert adoptive

belongings, that pioneers have “history starved boyhoods,” while portable emblems of the past can “lend continuity to new homes” (p.43). In a similar argument to Davis, he suggests that nostalgia restores a sense of worthiness in the elderly, while photographs play a significant part as treasured surrogate roots.

Aside from this analysis of its personal function, Lowenthal traces the history of nostalgia, as nostalgia moved from being an affliction of the body in the seventeenth century to being of the mind, or psycho-physiological, in modernity. He also consigns nostalgia to the category of history by claiming that nostalgia currently enhances communal and national unity, and legitimates a people by playing a paramount part in national identity “where individual and communal roots intertwine to make history all-pervasive” (p.46).

Lowenthal contends that the secrecy surrounding the experience of nostalgia until the 1970s was because ‘we’ did not want to let go of ‘our’ hold on the present, on whatever it meant to be modern. The state of nostalgia prior to the 1970s, when convictions about “man, woman, habits, manners, laws, society and God [were] challenged, disrupted and shaken as never before”, is compared to ‘today’ (1985), when our attachment to nostalgia is now ‘pathological’. Although “the seventeenth century disease [nostalgia] is now a drug that hooks us all...alienating people from the present” (p.13), it may compensate for being symptomatic of a malaise by buffering social upheaval and sustaining association. Like Davis, Lowenthal suggests that nostalgia now reaffirms identities (in this case those dislocated by the 1960s and 70s) and is strictly a state of mind, attracting or afflicting most levels of society.

Despite the way Lowenthal consigns nostalgia to the mind and concerns with identity, and pathologises nostalgia, his analysis of the commercialisation of nostalgia seems to hold some critical promise. He submits that “nostalgia’s profitability incites



real estate agents to “drum up interest by digging out every shred of history” (p.4), and the “remembrance of times past is a burgeoning business in almost every country, and any epoch will do” (p.6). It is the yearning, the feeling, or emotion that motivates people to collect relics and celebrate the virtues of the past no matter how trivial, brief or circumscribed. The more vivid time of childhood is especially sought by nostalgists. “What pleases the nostalgist is not just the relic but his own recollection of it, not so much the past itself as its supposed aspirations, less the memory of what actually was than of what was once thought possible” (p.10). In this logic, nostalgic attractions, or afflictions, are found in those seeking their ‘roots’ or collecting antiques or souvenirs, a propensity that attracts or afflicts most levels of society:

Ancestor-hunters search the archives for their roots; millions throng to historic houses; antiques engross the middle class; souvenirs flood consumer markets.... A growing rebellion against the present, and an increasing longing for the past, are said to exemplify the post-war mood.... For the first time in man’s history man is desperate to escape the present (Lowenthal 1985: 11).

In the next phase of his argument Lowenthal aligns himself with the dictates of western progress. According to Lowenthal, this kind of nostalgia reflects our mistrust of the future. The contemporary era is read in terms constituting economic ruin, resource depletion and nuclear Armageddon, so that the past has become an important haven, “and so excessive is our regression that one authority fears ‘we are entering a future in which people may again die of nostalgia’” (p.11). He agrees with Davis that, although nostalgia is a symptom of malaise, it also has compensating virtues. Attachment to familiar places may buffer social upheaval and attachment to familiar faces may be necessary for generating enduring association and reaffirming identities.

In assigning nostalgia to the categories of malaise, pathology, drug and alienation, Lowenthal also draws upon the psychological vocabularies of modernity to compare nostalgia with psychoanalysis. For this argument, psychoanalysis is

considered another realm of memory, enabling the search for origins and for 'meaning' in modernity. Lowenthal claims that history has left European society crippled by a despairing sense of being totally determined by the past. Citing Starobinski (1971: 333-4) he argues that psychoanalysis led Freud to posit primal scenes and archaic experience as being "the deepest and truest," while neutralising the power of the past imbued in historical awareness.

Countering the past's determinative force, modernists rebelled against the entire heritage. Psychoanalysts in particular sought to alleviate the burden of history through a better understanding of evolution, primitive history, and early life history. It was not in order to conserve the archaic past that Freud hoped to explain its consequences, but to render that past harmless.

Hence, nostalgia as a form of memory is implicated in the animation of Freudian psychology and the concept of the unconscious where, as Freud describes in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*; "impressions are preserved, not only in the same form in which they were received, but also in all the forms they have adopted in their further developments. Theoretically every state of mnemonic content could thus be restored to memory again" (Lowenthal 1985: 73).

Lowenthal applauds how psychology helps to change the past and free us from myths by re-examining and reconstructing our personal past. Despite this, our new past is no more final than the previous one. The past like 'identity' is integral to us all but history is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country; it is "assimilated" and "resurrected" into an ever-changing present (p.412).

[T]he cult of nostalgia, the yearning for roots, the demand for heritage, the passion for preservation show that the spell of the past remains potent...Once aware that relics, history, and memory are continually refashioned, we are less inhibited by the past, less frustrated by a fruitless quest for sacrosanct originals (Lowenthal 1985: 412).

## Memory and Identity

In this section, I consider how Lowenthal moves his focus from nostalgia to memory. While Lowenthal disparages the ‘cult’ that is nostalgia, memory is able to share a vocabulary with ‘identity’ because it too is individual, collective, personal, inviolable, private, unique and idiosyncratic.<sup>1</sup> Lowenthal notes however the contradictory, confused, tacit nature of memories involved in self-analysis. Although they are unreliable, he suggests that we place “unjustified confidence in our own memories, seldom questioning their reliability” (p.200).

Instead of drawing nostalgia into this discussion, the difference between *instrumental memory* and *reverie* is noted. He claims that due to adult social conventions, instrumental memory resurrects facts rather than feelings.

That we recall little of our earliest years stems less from repression than from the loss of sensate recollections that adults can no longer even remember experiencing. Adult memory schemata have no room for the smells, tastes, and other vivid sensations, or for the pre-logical and magical thinking of early childhood; deeply felt experience fails to register or is forgotten if it is socially inappropriate (Lowenthal 1986: 202).

On the other hand, *reverie* highlights remembered feelings; “[a]ffective memory of greatest intensity reveals a past so rich and vivid we all but relive it” (p.202). What I might call *nostalgia*, and Lowenthal calls *reverie*, is evoked by a touch, smell, taste or sound, which triggers heightened recollections. Lowenthal describes such recall as “‘visceral’; in Proust’s phrase, “our arms and legs are full of torpid memories” (p.204). For Lowenthal, memory juxtaposes recollection and a remembered past shaped within a multiform continuum consisting of many levels and categories. The process of recall mixes all of the different modes of memory, and provides various perspectives into the past.

It is apparent that both Davis and Lowenthal are fascinated by humanist psychological terms and concepts focusing on the 'authentic true self' (see for example Perls, 1971; Maslow, 1968; and Rogers, 1961). In this conceptual framework, an individual's life is seen as a process of trying to find the true self, as the impetus of the quest for self-fulfilment and self-actualization. This tradition presents the binaries of past/present, continuity/discontinuity, child/adult, reverie/memory in alignment with two concepts of the self: that of a pre-existent, authentic self that is lovable and worthy, and that of a self needing to be reassured amidst the social upheaval of modernity. This form presupposes that everyone has an older, deeper, more basic, healthy and whole self that is concealed by social forces and 'adult schema'. We might situate these ways of understanding nostalgia within the spectrum of what Potter and Wetherell call various 'models' of the self;

[e]ach of these models of the self claims to be the only valid self-portrait; either encapsulates some phenomenological or experiential truth (humanistic theory), is supported by psychometric research (trait theory), or appears to be the most sociologically coherent tool for the social scientist (role theory) (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 101).

In this framework, the self is the centre of experience, agentic, a coherent whole, and is separate from other selves. The self is also an object, the true nature of which can be found through analysis, including self-analysis.

Davis and Lowenthal both construct nostalgia as interiorised and as having a psychological form. Nostalgia is the illusionary yearning for the 'real me' or 'my core identity' which is in relation to the past. The 'inner' and 'outer' worlds are both addressed here through the various psychological moves attached to the whole project of our 'nostalgic identity'. If psychoanalysis neutralised history, as Lowenthal claims, then we might also argue that the socio-historical literatures here neutralise nostalgia.

What is striking about both Davis' and Lowenthal's work is how the bodily *homesickness*, magical, pre-logical and sensual, which might be part of nostalgia, is ignored in Davis' account and, because of its alleged social inappropriateness, consigned to *reverie* in Lowenthal's. Instead, nostalgia is in the mind, individualised, at the core of sense-making activities, and part of the self through lending coherence and continuity to modern life.<sup>2</sup>

## Nostalgia and Historicism

As the analysis of these first texts might reveal, there is nothing inherently true or false about representations concerning the past. The present section introduces the relation between nostalgia and the metanarrative of history. History is that metadiscourse of modernity ascribing meaning to the past from a 'gods-eye' view, where 'objectively' written linear and coherent accounts, substantiate the positivist delusion that the past might be made present again. To argue that these accounts of the past necessarily excluded nostalgia because it was quintessentially an affective phenomenon means that the past was not there to be felt and longed for, but to be understood and relegated to its proper place where the physical illness of longing for the past, *homesickness*, would not impede the drive of 'selves', 'progress', 'change' and 'freedom' that underpinned capitalist production.

As was made clear in the last section, the historical past and the psychoscientific past were able to disengage from nostalgia, which became discredited in terms of pathology. If Davis and Lowenthal sought to neutralise the malaise of nostalgia and lend it some credibility by conflating it with the psychological, then my next text endeavours to both repatriate and appropriate nostalgia by assimilating it within the boundaries of historicism.

Historical theorist F.R. Ankersmit (1994) proposes that nostalgia might well constitute a postmodern theory or “phenomenology of historical experience” (p.197). This statement appears to claim that nostalgia be perceived as an embodied phenomenon, which resonates with my own experiences of nostalgia. But to trace Ankersmit’s argument further, it is necessary to look at how he situates nostalgia within the dialectics of historicism and postmodernism. He claims that historicism (prior to postmodernism) was a theory of “historical forms or ideas” embodying the distinctive individuality of historical epochs or phenomena.

The historicist emphasis on difference was strongly reinforced by the historicist conviction that everything is what it is as a result of historical evolution. The essence of a nation, people, or institution could be found in its past (Ankersmit 1994: 186).

Postmodernism, however, is a theory of history. As Ankersmit points out, it is the first historical period to reject periodisation, (and he cites the examples of Vattimo (1988), Lang (1987), Megill (1985), (Lyotard 1979)). Although postmodernism insists on deconstructing the modernist discrimination between language and the world, both modernism and postmodernism depend upon the logic of difference. Ankersmit distinguishes historicism’s confidence in the unproblematic existence of a clearly defined past reality from postmodernity’s blurring of the distinction between reality and representation (p.192). He claims, “postmodernist depthlessness undoes the unity that the past possessed under the regime of modernity” (p.193).

The most important difference between historicism and postmodernism however is found in the role attributed to historical data and historical experience. The phenomenological collection of data becomes the basis of interpretation about a past reality for the historian. It is different for the postmodernist however, as is evident in Baudrillard’s theory of the simulacrum, which discounts the autonomy of past reality. Ankersmit contends “the real dispute between the postmodernist and the historian

concerns the nature of historical experience and the place of historical reality in the historian's experience of the past" (p.194). At this point he presents a postmodernist theory of historical experience that is the personal experience of the past found in nostalgic recollection.

Surely, if we do effectively possess the capacity to experience the past in the truest sense of the word, it is the feeling of nostalgia that bears the clearest sign of such experience and is likely to be the most suitable point of departure for discovering the nature of that experience.... [T]he empiricist account of science was often identified with sensory perception, hence, with how we as individuals experience the objects given to sensory perception.... [N]ostalgia and nostalgic remembrance of the past give us the most intense and most authentic experience of the past (Ankersmit 1996: 196).

He argues that the prototypical form of nostalgia is for one's lost childhood and an awareness of the displacement of being displaced. In nostalgia, the present-day is relegated to a temporal or spatial periphery and the nostalgic subject is "painfully aware of being where and when she [sic] does not want to be" (p.199). In Ankersmit's thesis, nostalgia always urges us to undo 'displacement' but never succeeds. For example, returning to one's childhood does not result in the satisfaction of nostalgic yearning, but reflects how the whole point of nostalgia is the bittersweet knowledge that it can never attain its goal.

Hence, nostalgia contains both joy and sorrow, and by acknowledging the unattainability of the past, it upholds the difference between past and present, the happiness and disappointment which it juxtaposes onto features of our present life. What is generated here is not the past, or childhood itself, but the difference between then and now; "in the experience of difference past and present are united" (p.201).

In Ankersmit's account, the value of nostalgia as a phenomenology of historical experience is that it questions historicist assumptions and extends knowledges. Nostalgic difference blends past and present and melts together the clear

lines and contours of the stoic, stable order of history that differs so conspicuously from the present. Such an authentic encounter with the past is the experience of a difference between past and present, childhood and adulthood (p.218).

By cutting historical phenomenology loose, the past is defamiliarised; the uncanny 'other' of ourselves becomes part of a *hyperreality* (Ankersmit's word) constituting historical thinking, talking and experience (p.228). He explains that the vilification of nostalgia within historism attempts to repress what we know to be part of ourselves, as culture and superstition have been ejected from reality and our 'home' has become inhospitable. But by acclaiming the nostalgic and estranged parts of our cultural and historical identity, the past loses its coherency and linearity. Instead of difference being in the objectified past itself, "the postmodernist experience of nostalgic difference will be labelled as either the experience of the reality of unreality or the experience of the unreality of reality" (p.207). Speaking of the nostalgic experience of difference, Ankersmit argues that

consistently purged of its associations with sentimentalism and with a spurious idealization (i.e. reification!) of the past [nostalgia] will be a most useful and welcome instrument for clarifying our understanding of the past and how we experience it (Ankersmit 1996: 206).

This text is rewarding in that it stresses the usefulness and value of nostalgia. What is disconcerting however, is that although Ankersmit uses the Baudrillardian terms *simulacrum* and *hyperreality* to describe postmodernity, these are understood as allowing for attributes of plurality, signalling the opportunity to devise a more inclusive historicity that could embrace nostalgia. In my understanding, these terms in Baudrillard's sense instead reflect a deeply critical theorisation of the shift to an ontology where models of reality precede representations of reality, an ontology upon which the contemporary world is predicated.



## A Radical Critique of the Modern

I turn from this reading where nostalgia is uncritically positioned under the umbrella of 'postmodern historicism' to the sociological stance of Bryan Turner. According to Turner (1987), the nostalgic paradigm found in settler societies such as New Zealand denotes a past of white, idealised values, a utopian homeland such as England free from the conflicts of multiculturalism, political pluralism and ethnic conflict. Conversely, Britain today itself experiences nostalgia for its colonising status, imperial power, world influence and the ideals of the monarchy such as familial authority, religion, national purpose and the unity of Commonwealth (p. 154). The conservative, retrospective and elitist character of nostalgic discourse, which Turner analyses quite dissonant from that looked at by Ankersmit, can be summed up as "guilt because of the loss of moral authority" (Turner 1987: 154).

Turner also appraises how contemporary culture represents the past as constituting a state of personal autonomy, spontaneity, naïveté, enjoyment and authenticity. He argues that this reading of the past implies that it was a world of genuine standards, individual freedom and the autonomy of educated taste that is compared to, and worn away by, the contemporary awareness of human homelessness, where intellectualism must now contend with the vulgarity of mass culture, mass education, modern transport and consumerism. Turner points out that contemporary theorists such as Kroker (1985) suggest that the quest "for the real", and Baudrillard's cynicism regarding the loss of the real "are nostalgic reflections on the loss of authenticity under the tyranny of the sign" (p. 153).

In keeping with this line of argument, Turner describes the 'present' as a context where the world against which Freud and Marx protested is largely obsolete, so it is difficult to know what would count as a 'dominant' social mass, against which

culture could be opposition. Because all culture is probably pseudo-culture, nostalgic critique involves a melancholic withdrawal from contemporary culture. Some critical leverage is consequently gained with Turner's statement that "nostalgia may play a highly ambivalent role in social criticism and social protest...[and] may lay the foundations for a radical critique of the modern as a departure from authenticity" (p. 154).

In a more recent text however, "Against Nostalgic Social Theory" (1989), Turner denounces the way that sociology, as a nostalgic science, [is] forced to identify with the past as a source of values against which to critique the present. He argues that this science includes critical theory, Weberian sociology and Foucauldian structuralism, and all theoretical approaches that fail to grasp the positive, emancipatory elements of contemporary culture. Instead, these critical theories regard all leisure pursuits, mass culture and modern conveniences as pursuing a hedonistic ethic and a form of human subordination. Turner then follows with an argument that mirrors Ankersmit's acclamation of the positive features of 'postmodernity'. Turner contends that nostalgic theory is now both elitist and puritanist because it does not theorise the element of liberation in consumer culture, the critique of exchange values and the fetishism of commodities.

In other words, postmodernity becomes the positive force addressing Weber's concerns about modernization including the routinisation of everyday life, disenchantment of religious values, differentiation of spheres of life, growth of bureaucracies, and the dominance of scientific and technical values of economic capitalism (p.198). In a litany of comparison, Turner argues that the contemporary milieu has remedied the sociological concerns of the nostalgic sciences of the past. Rational modernisation has been replaced by instrumental rationality; there is a new

focus on the emotions and the human body, a greater concern for the private, intimate, secret and everyday, the erosion of trust in economic capitalism and a growing awareness of environmental and green issues (p.198). Indeed, by stressing play, parody and simulation, “postmodernity emphasises the local, the oppositional, the contextual, and the locally specific” (p.198).

Mike Featherstone (1995) further emphasises that nostalgia, or the loss of a sense of home, is a potent contemporary sentiment. He claims that those groups that are ambivalent about modernity and retain a strong image of the alleged greater integration and simplicity of a more integrated culture from the past are particularly affected (p.107). What is most arresting about Featherstone’s work is his appraisal of how nostalgic depictions of the past, the ‘home’ we have lost, determine modern cultural critique and yet are dependent upon the cultural fluctuation of non-western nation-states and civilisations and the cultural heterogeneity of western modernity.

The difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity, and the doubts and anxieties these often engender, are reasons why ‘localism,’ or the desire to remain in a bounded locality or return to some notion of ‘home,’ becomes an important theme. This is regardless of whether the home is real or imaginary, or whether it is temporary and syncretized or a simulation, or whether it is manifest in a fascination with a sense of belonging, affiliation and community which are attributed to the homes of others, such as tribal people (Featherstone, 1995: 103).

Nostalgia is about “belonging, affiliation and community”? When these ideas are juxtaposed against my own personal nostalgia I agree. Featherstone’s perspective understands the past as consisting of simpler, more direct, strongly bonded social relationships drawn from the particular nineteenth-century models of social change which Turner just critiqued. Here, theorisation of the social bonds aligned with the past in a relationship of comparison with the present, addresses the historical and spatial continuum between small, relatively isolated integrated communities, based

upon strong, primary, emotionally safe relationships and the more anonymous forms of association distinguishing the modern conurbation.

## Nostalgia for the Sublime Origin

It is noticeable that the last three texts by Ankersmit, Turner and Featherstone all use the terms *simulation* and/or *hyperreality* and *postmodernity* unproblematically. In these applications, the terms seem to denote a freeing up of interpretation and an augmentation of positive attributes of limitless fluidity, flexibility, play and parody which lend pliancy to the interpretation of cultural phenomena. I suggest however that these theorists all use the terms without unpacking the ramifications of Baudrillard's argumentation, which regards these terms as problematic.

The next three sections engage with Baudrillard's approach, which I consistently read in conjunction with Grace's exegetic text (Grace, 2000). Baudrillard's work provides an epistemologically challenging and theoretically rigorous reading of nostalgia in the contemporary milieu. The first section engages with Baudrillard's critique of the codified structures underpinning Western culture. The second section reveals how nostalgia itself is represented as a cultural form in this interpretation. Thirdly, is discussion and consideration of Baudrillard's notion of 'symbolic exchange'. Grace argues that Baudrillard's text is not nostalgic in the traditional sociological sense (Turner) but rather that Baudrillard takes symbolic exchange as his critical point of departure. From this standpoint, the 'real' real and the modernist era in which it thrived, was oppressive and problematic.

## The Codification of Reality

To situate any exploration of nostalgia in the contemporary world means to understand how, in the last forty years, modernity has been structured in accordance with, what Baudrillard calls “the logic of sign value”. Substantively, Baudrillard argues that critique of the contemporary political economy has to include critique of “the political economy of the sign”. Specific to this approach are insights concerning the structural underpinning of the value of objects and the linguistic construction of subjects, which both reflect a vast sociocultural transformation accompanying the western transition to the modern political economy and economic exchange. In Baudrillard’s terms, the very problem of the predication of economic exchange onto the linguistic binary subject/object establishes a form of exchange presupposed by a code instigating value according to equivalence and difference. This is something that both political economy and Saussurean linguistics normalises.

The coded form constructing the object of economic exchange assumes that exchange value is predicated on a prior use value... The question of where the value comes from in economic exchange (when money changes hands) is resolved through recourse to the assumption of a natural and given use value: the utility of the object to the ‘individual’ (for the logic of utility to work there has to be an *individual* whose psychology accords with the logic of interest to maximise his or her ‘utility’: ‘use’ of objects; an individual *subject* of economic exchange)... The code instantiates this process whereby, relying on the dichotomous separation of exchange value from use value, a logic of equivalence structures the scale of value which is then necessary to establish the relationship between exchange value and use value (Grace 2000: 8).

While economics speculates that the terms of exchange are based on consumer-generated utility (or use value), Baudrillard’s claim is that “this structure is paralleled by the positing of a subject as dichotomously separate from an object, which implies one then has to institute the concept of ‘need’ to establish the subject/object relation” (Grace 2000: 8-9). In neoclassical economics, the presupposition is that the

subject/object relation is natural and based on prior 'need'. But in Baudrillard's terms, "the code, therefore, is the structural, dichotomous split, the bar that simultaneously separates and constitutes its terms as present/absent, identity/difference, 1/0" (Grace 2000:9).

In the last forty years, the postmodern is distinguishable from modernity because processes of economic exchange have gradually become structured in accordance with a logic of sign value, or the code. From a position highlighting the anachronism of the dialectical past/present relationship that dominated readings of nostalgia in modernity, Baudrillard argues that a critique of the ontology underpinning postmodernity requires a critically innovative approach. As Grace points out, "[p]roduction of sign value simply cannot be understood in terms of the 'capitalist mode of production'", but must reflect how "[t]he source of wealth has shifted from control of the means of production to a mastery of the process of signification" (p. 113). Accordingly, cultural phenomena (such as nostalgia) in postmodernity can best be analysed through critique of the political economy of the sign.

Postmodernity has also generated the modern concept of 'liberation', which rather than being transformative merely means that a wider group of people has gained entry into the world structured according to sign value. As Grace puts it, "all values, all signifiers, are indeed 'liberated' to produce more of the same, *ad infinitum*, in a boundless, hyperrealised consumerist world" (p.128). In this context, Baudrillard's theorisation of the codified structure of meaning and value signifies a challenge to the whole notion of identity.

'Identity' is a concept that is reliant on the instantiation of a series of dichotomous separations, whose relationships are then determined in the specific instance in accordance with a code that establishes the possibility of that relationship. The separations...self/other, self/body, male/female, subject/object, life/death...effect an ontological structure that is premised on the illusory construction of an essence. The 'identity' of one term is only possible within a structure that severs the 'being' of

that term from its representation (and the subsequent creation of a signifier/signified relationship), and that, in the same movement, crystallises the 'being' of that term as identical to itself and different from everything else (including its own death, its not-self)...Identity is premised on the notion of essence...because it becomes meaningful in a logic of the real where ontological status is separated...from its (linguistic) representation (Grace 2000: 41-2).

As has been argued, the poststructuralist feminist critique of gender relations, characterised by attempts to 'deconstruct' the hegemonic structure of logocentrism, could more usefully critique this subject/object binary form of identity/difference as the logic of a formulation of prior value and a prior economic order. In keeping with this, the structure of identity/difference cannot be understood only in semiological and psychoanalytic terms, because these indicate an inevitable 'subject'.

According to Baudrillard (1976), there is no possibility of defining authentic human needs and values under today's market conditions, which have done away with the distinction between the authentic and the artificial, indeed, the discourses defining such needs reinvent them in simulated form. This is what he calls the 'strategy of the real', which means a strategy to create the understanding that 'reality' is produced through a dichotomous separation of subject and object, and of the subject/object (referent) and its representation. An identity of the subject and of the object is made meaningful through a series of exclusions. However, the contemporary dominance of signs, images and representations in the world hides the fact that the 'real' has been obliterated and "truth, reference and objective causes have ceased to exist" (Baudrillard 1988: 168). Reality's antecedent relation to its representation has been distorted. Simulation means that signs now generate the real.

The precession of the model figures the real; identities and differences are modulated accordance with the model and proliferate indefinitely. The hyperreal overturns any distinction between the real and the imaginary, and leaves 'room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference' (Baudrillard 1981: 4). 'Orbital' is a spatial metaphor that conveys a sense of floating in a vacuous space with no other gravitational point of reference than the preceding

model, and 'simulated generation of difference' refers to the modelled (modulo, modulated, modal) quality of the resulting difference (Grace 2000: 84).

As we have heard, Baudrillard's argument is that all needs are generated as the effect of structures of exchange, which today are the effects of the code of consumption. In this light, the contemporary circulation of material goods can best be understood as the operation and diversification of signifying codes. It is not the actual or imagined 'need' that governs consumption but how consumer culture generates a universal code of exchangeability between commodities. Therefore the consumer's desire is not specifically for a particular object but for his or her own inclusion within the whole system of consumption. This desire for inclusion is stabilised through processes of social control including the media and advertising.

### **The Illusion of Nostalgia**

A prime example of the contemporary simulation of cultural forms (including nostalgia) is found in the text "The Illusion of the End" (1990), where Baudrillard considers the hyper-realisation of the past. In this text, nostalgia concurrently denotes conservation. But more than this, we hear Baudrillard's melancholic tone as he reflects upon how real nostalgia no longer exists.

Baudrillard first hypothesises the recent acceleration of modernity by technology, the media and systems of economic, political and sexual exchange. He argues that there has been a speeding-up of bodies, messages and processes caused by computers, circuits and networks. As well, a deceleration, or societal slowing-down, reflects the observation that history has ended, imploded and disappeared into a technological sense of time that is "so different from time in ritual societies" (p.9).



These insights progress the argument that the ‘end of history’ is structurally embedded in simulation. In other words, to have ‘history’ you need to have reality/real events followed by systems of representations of the past. But now, representations such as history (and nostalgia) have disappeared into processes (such as the “stereophonics” of the news) that are irreversible. The social is dissipated into social forms of regulation and reproduction; “[w]e shall never again know what the social was before being exacerbated into its present useless perfection” (1990: 6).

Consequently, humanity has left the referential world of the real, and of history, to move into the realm of simulation where simulated value is the contemporary form of value replacing the older values of nature, commodity and sign. Within this era of economic exchange characterised by the structural logic of sign value, or fractal value freed from any fixed scale of value (exchange value, or use value), experiences such as history and nostalgia must be read as simulated.

Grace explains this realm as one where “signs *are* the real, concealing the truth that there is none – no real, no truth.... The precession of the model figures the real; identities and differences are modulated in accordance with the model and proliferate indefinitely” (Grace 2000: 84). Hence the ‘real’, including history, racism, sexism, and the unitary subject, no longer exists but has been replaced by “the logic of viral dispersal networks” (Baudrillard 1990: 4). In this view, none of the structural ways of talking about individual nostalgia, according to ideas of ‘identity’ or ‘difference’, could apply.

Value [thus] had a natural aspect, a commodity aspect, and a structural aspect...At the fourth, the fractal (or viral or radiant) stage of value, there is no point of reference at all, and value radiates in all directions, occupying all interstices, without reference to anything whatsoever, by virtue of pure contiguity...a haphazard proliferation and dispersal of value (Baudrillard 1990: 5).

Like the current state of all values, those binaries organising linear time, sameness and difference within nostalgic discourse, such as child/adult, nature/culture, past /present, have become like particles, rather than natural, commodified or coded values. Each aspect of nostalgia, each part of the binary follows its own trajectory, it appears and disappears, intersects with others, or not. In other words, the form of the fractal could be said to characterise the contemporary pattern of nostalgia in Western culture. As Grace explains;

[t]he fractal subject is no longer dreaming of his or her ideal image (narcissistic), but of the formula to reproduce him or herself into infinity. What matters is to resemble oneself – to be less what one is – and to find oneself everywhere. As ‘others’ become less and less the horizon of the subject, difference becomes less and less a question of self and others and more a matter of crafting an endless proliferation of the self-same...The subject’s horizon becomes reduced to the manipulation of his/her images (Grace 2000: 137-8).

Because technological innovation profoundly alters contemporary memories and other intellectual structures, Baudrillard argues that there is now a form where the past is reviewed and rewound endlessly, so that personal and collective cultural history is subjected to continuous analysis, correction and elucidation. As well, technologically induced processes including filing, recording and memorising everything of the past, and the past of all cultures, is itself a symptom that humanity is faced with “the absence of a future and the glacial times which await us” (Baudrillard 1990: 9). By reviewing, rewriting, and restoring history, negative personal and national memories are obliterated and the wrongs of the past are righted and aligned with the ideals of human rights democracy. In this way, western culture is understood to be reconciled with, at the same time as it is fiercely protective of, the past.

Nostalgia, as a fractalised cultural form, expresses this cultural desperation by generating multifarious attempts to recover what is lost, through refurbishing tradition as heritage, constructing colonial architecture, researching genealogical

‘roots’, ‘retro’ art, music and books, radio and television programmes, souvenirs, photographs, and antiques. Places and performances of celebration and commemoration that glorify, like museums and cenotaphs, attest to national activities of mourning and the construction of synthetic memories. This is “the spectacular promotion of a phenomenon, shifting it from historical space into the sphere of advertising, the media becoming the site of a temporal strategy of prestige” (Baudrillard 1990: 23).

Baudrillard pessimistically reads such rehabilitation of the old as purely superficial, with “no effect on the present melancholy of the century” (p.120). Although humanity tries to resurrect what is irrevocably lost, to conserve what is left of real emotions and a real social domain and give continuity and form to human life, these actions are futile. Despite nostalgic attempts to rediscover the real and the referential, these very attempts only result in ever more profound simulation of the lost sociality.

Most perspicaciously, Baudrillard reflects melancholia for nostalgia itself in this hyperreal realm of simulation. As he charts what is extinct, no longer, or disappearing, nostalgia itself is included. Nostalgia was the “sublime reference” situating a beautiful origin that one longed for. We can no longer dream of the “sublime origin” however, because the ‘true’ has lost its opposite – the ‘imaginary’ – differential logic is lost and value systems have lost their value.

Nostalgia for the lost object? Not even that. Nostalgia had beauty because it retained within it the presentiment of what has taken place and could take place again. It was as beautiful as utopia, of which it is the inverted mirror. It was beautiful for never being achieved. The sublime reference to the origin in nostalgia is as beautiful as the reference to the end in utopia (Baudrillard 1990: 120).

In this text Baudrillard is lamenting the “beauty” and ambivalence of symbolic exchange, which is more evident in the “lost” nostalgia than in its contemporary

simulated reincarnation. Consequently, melancholia is induced for “the lost object” and for the loss of nostalgia itself, as it is now synthetically generated in hyperreality.

## Symbolic Exchange

The economic is always accumulative and repetitive. The symbolic is the reversal, the resolution of accumulation and repetition; the resolution of the phantasm (Baudrillard 1993: 241).

Vitality for my analysis of the research participants’ narratives, Baudrillard critiques the logic of the form of economic exchange with its radical ‘other’, ‘symbolic exchange’, which means that is no autonomous object or subject, no code, or economic value, and “[t]he object takes on its meaning in the relationship of exchange” (Grace 2000: 11).

Symbolic exchange is a process of non-essentialist, dynamic challenge and seduction; a social process whereby objects seduce, meanings are continually exchanged, the meanings and status of subjects are always ambivalent (Grace 2000: 11).

To theorise the ‘symbolic’ as a critical construct means understanding how that which is the ‘social’ establishes the assumed rationality of the economic and the semiological by radically excluding the symbolic (p.140). As Charles Levin (1996) argues, ‘society’ has become an increasingly system-like abstraction in part by offloading its affective social content (p.93). But, claims Grace, in symbolic exchange

[t]he social traverses people and things; persons and things seduce and challenge each other, encounters are open and not prefigured by codified structures of meaning...the eradication of the symbolic might be understood precisely to obliterate ‘reality’ by inscribing it within a codified structure that precedes its encounter...the symbolic puts an end to the real, where the real is that specified by the signified, and where the signified is in fact, as he [Baudrillard] argues, *preceded* by the signifier – a codified, constructed meaning (Grace 2000: 42).

Symbolic exchange is the critically antithetical principle from the economic. The symbolic does not allude to a ‘real’, prior realm, but draws upon Baudrillard’s

theorising of Mauss' work on gift exchange, Saussure's anagrams and Freud's theory of the death drive (*Thanatos*). All three describe "a functional principle sovereignty outside and antagonistic to our economic 'reality principle'" (Baudrillard 1993: 2).

Everywhere, in every domain, a single form predominates: reversibility, cyclical reversal and annulment put an end to the linearity of time, language, economic exchange, accumulation and power. Hence the reversibility of the gift in the counter-gift, the reversibility of exchange in the sacrifice, the reversibility of time in the cycle, the reversibility of production in destruction, the reversibility of life in death, and the reversibility of every term and value of the *langue* in the anagram. In every domain it assumes the form of extermination and death, for it is the form of the symbolic itself. Neither mystical nor structural, the symbolic is inevitable (Baudrillard 1993: 6).

Meanings are not representational; rather, signs, meanings and challenges move across the range of social forms in a symbolic exchange (Grace 2000: 95). This cyclical movement is a form of reversion, a gesture that cannot be represented in words. Meanings are not singular and positive but "that which *is* contains the possibility of its seduction, its transformation, its death" (p. 43).

As Grace emphasises, the symbolic is unable to be formally defined but is marked by its ambivalence and its very antithesis to western semiology and axiology. The body in its material and bodily signs are the symbols exchanged. Unlike bodies in the economic and semiotic realm, bodily signs and symbols are exchanged and masked, a masking that "consumes the subject's identity" (Baudrillard 1976: 107). Other characteristics of symbolic exchange and reversion are found in poetic language. As Grace explains, the poetic is a symbolic process that annuls the sign and representation (p. 43).

Poetic language can be understood as a site of the extermination of the relentless positivity of value, and its structural predicate, the law. The poetic is a site where symbolic exchange and reversion are evident within the field of language, and as such Baudrillard argues it reveals the ideological reduction at the heart of semiology, or linguistics (Grace 2000: 172).

The realm of symbolic exchange is thus constituted by what Baudrillard calls ‘challenge’ and ‘seduction’. These terms are used to denote a form of sociality where life and death, existence and non-existence are not polarised ontologically but exist simultaneously within a cyclical process of confrontation and change.

In societies of symbolic exchange, meanings activate, seduce, and transform, often in a highly ritualised fashion. It is a mistake to view them as representational. Signs, or meanings, in this sense traverse and circulate over the entirety of forms present in that social sphere (Grace 2000: 43).

## **New Patients of the Imaginary**

This section continues the appraisal of nostalgia’s potential as an instrument of cultural critique by engaging with Kristeva’s reading of Marcel Proust, where meaning is predicated upon sensation rather than semiological or axiological code.

The sense of the loss of ‘real’ cultural forms is reflected in Kristeva’s semiotic-psychoanalytic and postphenomenological analysis, which strongly informs my analysis of New Zealand women’s nostalgia in the final chapters. It is of critical significance for my investigation that Kristeva’s analysis engages with nostalgia in the contemporary milieu.

Proust (1871-1922) published *À La Recherche du Temps Perdu* (In Search of Lost Time) between 1913 and 1922. Kristeva’s text *Time and Sense* (1996) provides an analysis of how Proust generates nostalgia in the novels as a textual blend of time, memory, past and present worlds, sensations and identities.<sup>3</sup> Kristeva’s text provides insights into how Proust’s writing generated a new modern aesthetic and conception of temporality early in the twentieth century, including “a round-trip journey from past to present and back” (p. 168). She argues that *In Search of Lost Time* is a *bildungsroman* where the Proustian character constitutes a micrometaphor of the sense of time.

A critical phenomenological epistemology is inserted into Kristeva's analysis when she argues that, for the Proustian narrative, objects begin to have meaning once he discovers the sensations associated with them. This means that time itself is an association between two sensations that emanate from signs and are then felt by the body. This modern sense of temporality or time, explores a memory "rooted in a sensuality" where "the duration of time becomes fragmented, diverse, disparate, and unified" (p.168).

By constructing a space of memory, Proust's concept of time locates an embodied imaginary, where words form the link between bodily sensation and the world. Thus, the world of the past is explored through memory where the narrator "unfolds ideas and images, flavours, smells and tactile impressions, reverberations and sensations, jealousies, frustrations, bounds of sadness and more joys, as long as I can manage to put them into words" (p.170).

Most saliently for my analytical work, Kristeva's text reflects a phenomenology of nostalgic experience where, similar to Baudrillard's "symbolic exchange", memory constitutes the ambivalence of experiences, of events, of Being there, of places and times, as well as past and present worlds. This effect is predominantly constructed around Proust's investigation of the memories instigated by tasting a madeleine cake. She explains how, "[i]n Proust's world, the child is an adult who recalls loving people and places with his mouth – people and places that his grown-up desires claim are harmless" (p.4). Indeed, in her reading, the entire value of childhood is inserted into a sponge cake containing many layers of sensation. Accordingly, the prospect of reviving our past is tentatively suggested, for if our past can hide itself "in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us), chance alone should be enough to bring it into our world" (p.5). From

“Movement Five” in Proust’s eight-movement text, Kristeva clarifies what happens when the morsel of madeleine cake soaked in tea touches the palate.

The point of contact (the most infantile and archaic that a living being can have with an object or a person, since food, along with air, is that exquisite need that keeps us alive and curious about other people) releases something ‘extraordinary ...that was happening to me’. Simply put, this ‘something’ is pleasure: ‘An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its {cause}’ (Kristeva 1996: 17).

Although the process of memory still remains a mystery, this recollection enables the narrator to overcome depression through partaking of love through the senses. In Proust’s words, “[w]hence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy?” (Kristeva 1996:17). The narrator explains that the sensation is not natural because it is applied to tea and cake, “the objects of our world”, for “[t]aste is of the world, and because of taste and the other sensations, so is the very experience that restores them to us” (Kristeva 1996:17). Hence sensory experience transcends flavours because it is not only sensory but also has meaning when the narrator reflects upon, and begins writing about the experience. Then, sensation and representation sadly drift apart, precisely when the immediate experience of taste “is transcended by an effort to ascertain its meaning” (Kristeva 1996:18). Kristeva explains that a sudden remembered substitution provides “a stable image for both the indecisive effervescence of identity and the gap between what is perceived and what is meant” (p.19). Consequently, metonymy is formed between present and past sensations, where

[i]t is as if a maximum degree of distance – indeed a foreign country – had to precede our seeing the evanescence (also of a maximal degree) of an object of desire that the little madeleine allows us to feel. Here and elsewhere, past and present, sensations and image, name and meaning: a madeleine is steeped in each of them, exciting the taste of one as much as the other (Kristeva 1996: 21).



## Signs Manipulated in Technique

In Proust's text, nostalgia occurs because a sensation from the past remains within the body. An involuntary memory vivifies this sensation when a similar perception in the present is stimulated by the same desire as the former sensation. This movement, predicated on a memory, generates sensation that transverses time and space.

Kristeva identifies two themes structuring this phenomenon. The first is the blissful experience of passion and the "feeling of nothingness, of a putting-to-death and of the strange changeability of loved ones" leading to forms of suffering. Second, is how memory makes us aware that our body can accommodate both bliss/passion and nothingness, superimposing a chain of different and parallel selves. The current self can discover the previous integral self as long as the underlying sensations are intact, constituting "a joy combined with grief and guilt" (p. 181). In Kristeva's reading, Proust constructs nostalgia by merging two spaces, two times and two sensations: a "primal metaphorical condensation" that develops a fragmented continuity, so that lost time is sought after within a spatial imaginary, and a sense of time is regained through the very process of spatio-temporal continuity and fragmentation.

The Proustian text generates narrative tension by contracting binary oppositions, especially representation/the essence of things, and past/present, so that sensation becomes a tiny piece of time in the pure state (Kristeva 1996:199). Every page of Proust's text includes multiple sensations, which form a space between perception and memory. Kristeva explains how memory is both the agent that restores sensation to us, and the veil that separates us from sensation. "Memory, the equivalent

of language, assigns language the role of a filter that signifies what is felt (in *absentia*) while also marking it (in *praesentia*)” (p.208).

In opposition to the trajectory where “linear time leads implacably to death”, (p.304), Proust’s narrative constructs a polyphony of time and space using fluctuating temporal and spatial forms including oppositions, embedding, specific grammatical forms (such as present participles), sensory markers, sequencing and repetition. Unlike linear time, this kind of backward memory invokes timelessness. Kristeva claims that Proust’s concept of time, his construction of the remembrance of things past, indeed his nostalgia, is a way of thwarting death and memory while prolonging childhood and sensation (p.309). This effect is brought about by the Proustian sentence itself, which consists of subordinate clauses (adverbial clauses or clauses transformed into participles) that keep opening up details of memory and modulating space into time.<sup>4</sup> She explains this more fully,

By always going back to the branches suspended in the tree of memory, no detail will be forgotten.... We have no time other than the time of our syntax. The chronological progression of the sentence [that] makes its subject work towards an object or a goal ...linear time leads implacably to death (that “fear,” that “risk”). Unlike linear time, the sentences reproduce a giant breath through explanatory detours or backward leaps that develop traces that had already been constructed, erased, or not absorbed. The chronological progression, broken up and superimposed onto itself, can thus stretch out into a space - the architecture already the anterior texture of a sort of timelessness (Kristeva 1996: 304).

## Implications for Today

According to Kristeva, today we have become lost in a world of technical efficiency and spectacle, banality, and totalitarianism. Here the “passion of bodies” has become utilitarian, and we have become lost, being found only as “new patients of the imaginary” (p.325), in other words, as subjects or consumers of the contemporary mode of speaking and being. Proustian time is not linear but a “hybrid creation”,

where the signified is “devoured by the sensed” (Kristeva 1996: 307). This is distinguishable from Heidegger’s concept of being human, which he calls Being-there, a Dasein, and “a thrown Being-in-the-world” that is “always ahead of itself” (p.309). Categories of existence in Heidegger’s concept of time and human life are constituted by the structure of *cura*, or “concern” connoting “anxious exertion” and “carefulness”. In other words, anxiety and care generate past, present and future vocabularies and concepts of time. As our discussion of history confirmed, when Being is understood as “temporality” and “concern”, the loss of time (nostalgia for example) has a pejorative connotation.

Kristeva’s theorisation also draws conclusions about the implications of these Proustian concepts of time for today. She argues that Heidegger’s concept of Dasein continues to characterise the contemporary West as the technological, military, and commercial and mediatised race impatiently towards tomorrow.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, concern and representation are overwhelmed by this impatience for tomorrow and history has given in to the temptation of satisfying desires at any cost. Subsequently, people are concerned “for an object of love or an object of consumption”, such as the escapism of a book, film, video or television programme, that generates a *jouissance* where sensations are found in a space extended beyond Time (p.310).

In juxtaposition with an impatience for tomorrow, the Proustian imaginary proposes a way of thinking about human life characterised by a series of displacements, divergences and diversities, that divide up content and develop multiple points of suspension and diversified resolutions (p.311). His textual polymorphism can be read as the narrative technique through which the reality of nostalgia and the involuntary memory of a lost time are restored. Consequently,

anxiety about death, in the form of the Proustian sentence, reflects the polyvalence generating both a *bildungsroman* and nostalgia for a past space.

Proust's theories were historically and biographically specific to the modern era but, in Kristeva's opinion, have application to the postmodern age. This is because the Proustian construction of time enables us nowadays to name "the irreconcilable fragments of time that are pulling us in all directions more fervently and dramatically than ever before" (p.168). In today's stressful, cramped and demanding life, Kristeva argues that we can be revitalised by searching for *jouissance* and experience, while allowing ourselves to be immersed in "time embodied" (p.198). This means that when we experience a state of disenchantment or sensations of a previous *jouissance* - perhaps triggered by food, drink or smell, - the process of writing about this will restore time to language, taking the writer (and reader) out of the disenchanted state towards one's "inner wealth" (p.299).<sup>6</sup> Thus textual polymorphism restores the involuntary memory of a lost time, and addresses the hunger for relationship in the cultural emptiness of the contemporary world.

## Discussion

The investigation of nostalgia in this chapter has been through critical appraisal of six key texts. The chapter begins with considering readings that situate nostalgia within the epistemologies and ontologies of psychological identity, where it is understood as a pathological escape from present reality (Lowenthal). But reading the past in terms of psychological identity ignores how, when understood through a critique of contemporary political economy, simulated hyperreality is the corollary of the codification of identity and difference.

Ankersmit's reconceptualisation of nostalgia as a phenomenology of past experience provided the first reading to resonate with my own experiential narrative of nostalgia. Ankersmit argues that this phenomenon constitutes an expanded (or postmodernist) theory of history. We might ask whether one can hoist a "phenomenology of past experience" – meaning nostalgia – onto history, when in Baudrillardian terms, such a move, rather than providing a critical perspective, simply reflects the ontology upon which "postmodernity" is grounded. Like Ankersmit, Turner also provides a paradoxical contribution. He both affirms the critical potential of "sociological" nostalgias and then denounces these because, in his opinion, postmodernity has redressed the very points of concern upon which sociological nostalgia is premised.

I think it is worth spelling out how radical Baudrillard's assertions are in this context. He does not use his terms *simulacrum*, *hyperreality* and *postmodernism* uncritically, but argues that these concepts reflect the Western axiological and semiological systems that define existence in the contemporary West. In postmodernity the loss of referentiality accompanying the flotation of value and signification means that the reference point for reality is displaced, generating simulated nostalgias that are *more*–'real' (hyperreal) than an experience of nostalgic remembering.

Kristeva's critique of Proust's text utilises semiotics and post-phenomenology to describe the Proustian imaginary as a phenomenological way of understanding one's relationship to the past. Like Baudrillard, Kristeva recognises the utility of bodies within the current totalitarian state. Her argument is that the body and sensation can be reinserted into language, time and memory. It is important to my argument that smell, sound, touch, sight and taste "indeed Proust's sensory universe is

made of the entire gamut of sensations and their surprising variations...a structure of substances, meanings or forms” (Kristeva 1996: 205). Her reading of Proust’s complex narrative structure gestures towards an immersion in embodied time, similar to Baudrillard’s reflections on symbolic exchange, a position from which to critique the contemporary era.

Nostalgia is given remarkable salience in Baudrillard’s work, explicating the endless process of nostalgic reproduction and the collective revival mania that has overcome the contemporary west. Specific nostalgias themselves can be read as no longer existing in reality but functioning in a simulated form, while cultural operations hyperrealise nostalgias through interminable simulation. Unlike humanist, psycho-scientific epistemologies and ontologies, which tend to deride, minimise or ignore nostalgia, or ‘post modern’ readings that reflect simulation itself, Baudrillard’s theories, and Kristeva’s reading of Proust, stress the significance of nostalgia for what it might tell us about embodiment and cultural change. They also situate nostalgia in the present milieu of hyperreality. Accordingly I establish a conversation between psychoanalysis and Baudrillardian thought which is deeply critical of the dichotomous logic upon which psychoanalysis is founded. I also make obvious how Freud’s theories, despite their ubiquity in contemporary theory and in the narrative accounts of the research participants, are anachronistic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This relationship resonates within a wider field of nostalgias in the next chapter, which engages with literature that critiques nostalgia from the standpoint of poststructural feminism and anthropology.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Lowenthal's examination of memory conflates memory and identity, and differentiates between the possible kinds of memory. He claims that insights into the uses of memory come mostly from novelists, historians, and psychoanalysts rather than from psychologists (1986: 193).

<sup>2</sup> Nikolas Rose might claim that this kind of 'unified' self is the same as the familiar 'I' of humanist philosophy (Rose 1996: 177).

<sup>3</sup> Kristeva claims that for three or four hundred years, literature has given western civilisation meaning, so that by "tracing the beings and things situated in time, the novel becomes a journey to the end of memory" (Kristeva 1996: 167). "Whether we are lost in time, losing time, or losing our lives without discovering anything in death, we are made of the same substance as time because it defines the boundaries of our speech" (p.167).

<sup>4</sup> Proust's "involuntary memory" and narrative complexity reflect the great modern philosophers of time such as Hegel, Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger. Freud also wrote about time with his notion of free association. Proust however, not only constructs an immediate plot-related temporality, he also juxtaposes this with an implicit temporality which "transcends measurement, space and duration by telescoping two events, signs, or sensations in order to present a metaphor as an index of truth, by hollowing out syntax through multiple and diverse embeddings, and by targeting a polyphonic region of understanding at the limits of language" (Kristeva 1996: 304).

<sup>5</sup> An impatience for, and preoccupation with the future was clearly echoed in Bill Clinton's final address as President to the Democratic Convention, when, amidst thunderous applause, he looked directly into the camera feeding into millions of homes and very clearly repeated his campaign slogan "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow".

<sup>6</sup> Kristeva differentiates between Proust's writing about sensation and Freud's model of the psychic apparatus. In Proust's text, "a concept of sensation-perception [that] is separate from the strictly psychoanalytic view that identification and the Oedipal complex are essential for mental functioning" (p.231). Proust utilises an expanded and nuanced rhetoric to facilitate the speaking subject's access to sensation; here "we shall discover a borderline region in our psyche that is restored by aesthetic experience" (Kristeva 1996: 249).

## CHAPTER TWO: FEMINIST LITERATURE REVIEW

‘Birds, women, writing,’ as I read the chapter from Leviticus, form a series of equivalencies. A very poetic chapter from Leviticus presents me with a long strange list of what is prohibited and what is allowed, you are sacred, you are defiled – oh, the interminable inventory of abominations (Cixous: 1998: 131).

This chapter addresses contemporary feminist literature scoping the relationship between feminism and nostalgia that itself constitutes a critical engagement with the cultural phenomena of modern and postmodern western culture. The sections that follow draw upon feminists who theorise about nostalgia from a variety of poststructural perspectives, from philosophy, literary criticism, psychoanalysis and anthropology.

### Nostos, Algos and Ressentiment

A central issue in feminist literature is its reflection upon how the feminist movement itself is founded on nostalgia, or the longing by women to chart the pain (*algos*) of the longing to return ‘home’ (*nostos*) in the alienating context of western culture. In the 1960s and 1970s for example, feminist literature engaged with the lost maternal as a utopian promise of a feminist future for women. Feminists gave a backward glance to archaeological origins, where the notion of a prehistoric matriarchy that was supplanted by dispossessing patriarchal hordes, became the subject of feminist nostalgia (Stone 1976). There is nostalgia involved too, in how feminists vivify and document the historical presence of feminist foremothers, while appraising their potential for contemporary feminism.<sup>1</sup> Other literature of this era considering the situation of women from a psychoanalytic perspective looks back to the patriarchal kinship systems evolving



from incest taboos, to describe how men subordinated women to govern their homosocial relationships, while ensuring males had sexual access to females (Mitchell 1974).

Most importantly, this revisionist yearning, constituted a feminist identity based on a humanist ontology, implying an essence at the heart of the individual, which is fixed, unique and coherent, making her who and what she is. As Chris Weedon explained in 1987, it might be the unified rational consciousness of liberal political thought, the essence of womanhood at the core of radical and lesbian feminisms, or the notion of true human nature alienated by capitalism that is also central to humanist socialism and Marxism. In humanist feminist literature, the main issue was with women's nature and its identity with, and difference from, the nature of man.

Such an articulation of nostalgia is striking in two ways. First it echoes the modern condition, the transcendental homelessness or nostalgia, of modern phallogentric humanism. Secondly, this nostalgia acted as a motivating force for oppositional politics. By stoking the modern polarisation of complementarity and opposition, it might be claimed that, in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, feminist nostalgia played a significant part in stimulating the politics and praxis of liberationist theories conditioned by a kind of *ressentiment*.

From a Foucauldian perspective, Wendy Brown contends that the late modern politicised subject's identity structured by *ressentiment* "produces identity as both bound to the history that produced it and as a reproach to the present that embodies that history" (1995: 73). Such a subject becomes attached to its exclusion and, I might add, nostalgia, because it is premised on this exclusion for its very existence as identity.

## Poststructural Feminist Literature

This chapter is contextualised by the transformation that has occurred in the last twenty years as the west has gradually become post-industrialised, as economies and communications have been globalised, and as the increasing migration patterns in post-coloniality have led to fragmented and pluralistic societies. In the 1980s and 1990s, literature from women's and feminist studies courses, authoritative multidisciplinary feminist texts, journals, presses, conferences and research centres have been the technologies utilising feminist criticism and scholarship, which has increasingly turned to poststructural theories to critique how women are currently positioned in this milieu.

In poststructural feminist literature, gender-specific categorisation in terms of subjectivity presupposes the feminine subject's nostalgia for equivalence with masculine subjectivity. Such a 'place', it is conjectured, concerns a world of meanings more relevant to women. It includes the plurality and multiplicity of female life experiences and social positions not rendered in the dominant western discourses, which essentialise and universalise female experience according to the mind/body dualism that equates women with female reproductive sexuality and forms of embodiment.

Key ideas in this literature emphasise the social despair generated by the subordination of women, where women are: "effaced, neutralised, objectified, alienated" (Grosz 1994), "effaced, deformed, deficient" (Gatens 1991), "unrepresented, powerless" (Scarry 1985), "homesick, culturally insignificant" (Irigaray 1991), "passive, nonexistent, unthought" (Cixous 1975), "erased" (Cornell 1991). These themes emphasise the loss, dereliction and longing of women vis à vis patriarchal discourse and, no matter what their theoretical persuasion, the feminist demand is for "new models" through which gender

divisions and/or female identities, the subject and/or subjectivities might be reconceptualised (Grosz 1994: 23). Such “new models” offer a challenge to

...most notably the patriarchal rationalization of male domination in terms of the fragility, unreliability, or biological closeness to nature attributed to the female body and the subordinate character attributed to women on account of the close connections between female psychology and biology (Grosz 1994: xiv).

Uncovering effacement, repossessing an identity, entering into exclusion, countering an erasure is very different from the idea of ‘reconceptualising’ subjectivity. Luce Irigaray is an authoritative feminist theorist who “reworks” traditional masculinist epistemologies and ontologies. It is important to my concerns that she reflects women’s situation as both the subject and object of nostalgia. As is clear from Irigaray’s deconstruction of philosophical paradigms, she submits that ‘female identity’ is an impossibility because “any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the masculine” (1985: 133). In *The Poverty of Psychoanalysis* Irigaray expresses women’s “homelessness” in the Symbolic Order<sup>2</sup>, where women are nowhere, lost, dissolved, empty and “gone away from themselves”(1991:91). She further describes women’s lostness as “the suffering and abandonment of the fusional state which fails to emerge as a “subject” because “ no space-time is available for experiencing it” (1993: 139). Accordingly, women remain in some sense aligned with the unsymbolised maternal relation because they cannot negotiate their own energy in the symbolic as long as they represent the outer limits of subjectivity for men. Irigaray argues that what we might call this nostalgic positioning of woman as the “outer limits of male subjectivity” is sustained in all western discourse.

[For the masculine] love is teleological. It aims for a target outside them. It moves toward the outside and to the constitution, on the outside, within that which is outside themselves, of a home. Outside the self, the tension, the intention, aims for a dwelling, a thing, a production (Irigaray 1993: 101).

Irigaray highlights the role of the maternal and the maternal body, arguing that they have been devalued and obliterated in the construction of a masculine world (Irigaray, 1997: 7). In this role, a woman is “used as a kind of envelope by man in order to help him set limits on things. The relationship between the envelope and things represents one of the aporias, if not the aporia, of Aristotelianism and the philosophical systems which are derived from it” (Irigaray 1991: 169). Correspondingly, the notion that metaphysics has had since Aristotle is that woman is a container, an external covering or kind of envelope for man, and this metaphor is sustained in various representations of the maternal mother as castrator. Irigaray draws on notions of ‘home’ and ‘womb’ to question the ways in which women provide a ‘place’ for man, but are ‘home-sick’ for their own place.

Does the father replace the womb with the matrix of his language? But the exclusivity of his law refuses all representation to that first body, that first home, that first love. These are sacrificed and provide matter for an empire of language that so privileges the male sex as to confuse it with the human race (Irigaray 1993: 14).

Irigaray claims that what woman provides, in terms of the maternal body and a home enables man to be what he is, and gives him a place in the world. Citing Aristotle, she writes: “if everything exists, it exists in some ‘place’ [so that] then if the place itself exists it too must have a place to exist in, and so on *ad infinitum* (1993: 34-35). Consequently, for a feminist exploring sexual difference in the western tradition Irigaray describes, woman is constituted as both *nostalgic* and *nostalgia*; she is “that first home” and place for the masculine, but longs for a place of her own; in other words, she is homesick. What becomes problematic is that although woman provides a sexual site for man, his reproductive and creative acts, he works in, on and through her, the “inestimable” debt the patriarchal commercial system owes to maternity, and the mother’s body, is not recognised (1993:44).

Irigaray's solution is to rework masculinist teleological subjectivity, drawing instead upon woman's search 'of her identity in love' where she is not just the object of nostalgia or a nostalgic subject with the notion of an 'horizon', or object, to be longed for. That is, Irigaray seeks to insert the female body into language and culture. "Thus the woman seeks her humanity and her transcendency, she recognises her bodily experience through attempting to give it a future which will conceptually enable its specific recognition" (Irigaray 1994: 344). As Grace has pointed out however, by stressing the ontological specificity of 'woman' and 'woman's sexuality in a semiology of identity/difference, in Irigaray's argument an essence is always assumed (Grace 2000: 45). In the sections that follow, I engage with other poststructural feminist theory that also attempts to grapple with nostalgia's problematic status for women.

### **Don't Go There!**

This section includes literature that critiques literary texts, fundamentalist politics, and psychoanalysis where writers uphold nostalgia's pejorative status by pointing out, similar to Irigaray, how nostalgia adversely positions women. Their reaction is the result of understanding nostalgia as a conservative, reactionary and regressive phallogocentric force that seeks to draw women and other disadvantaged groups back from the liberating forces of progressive discourses such as feminism (e.g. Greene 1991; Doane and Hodges 1987; Stewart 1984; Brown 1987; Combs 1993). These theorists build their arguments by critiquing how conservative masculine constructions of nostalgia position women. Here fundamentalist, commonsense or modern nostalgia implies specific positions, ideologies and meanings that are damaging to feminist concerns. Nostalgia is not a mild-mannered,

sentimental activity here at all, but is dangerous to women because it conceals the seeds of imperial whiteness, male supremacy and the ascendancy of capitalism and western values. Texts in this category use the term ‘nostalgia’ unproblematically, as analogous with the longing for times and places where women *per se* were disadvantaged in feminist terms.

From the field of feminist literary criticism, Janice Doane and Devon Hodges (1987) investigate the phenomenon of nostalgia in authoritative male literary texts. They claim, “nostalgic writers construct their visions of a golden past to authenticate woman’s traditional place and to challenge the outspoken feminist criticisms of it” (p.3). Arguing that nostalgia is a rhetorical practice, these texts challenge the antifeminist impulse that informs the work of a variety of male writers who stereotype women as gentle nurturers, and men as needing to be tamed by marriage. Such male writers, they argue, blame feminism for the proliferation of texts which contribute to the instability of sexual identity, accuse feminists of destabilising paternal authority, and assert sexual difference to limit the effect of this process on “mastery, integrity and truth” (p.141). Doane and Hodges’ approach fixes the meaning of nostalgic rhetoric and calls for feminist theorists to instead leave cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity “in play, rather than in place” (1987: 142). This conflates nostalgia itself with antifeminism because these reflections of male nostalgia are hostile to feminism. This means ultimately, and in keeping with Doane and Hodge’s intention, that nostalgia is concretised in terms of masculine hegemonic literatures, while the authors seek to leave sexual difference “in play” (p.142).

Rosaria Champagne (1997) classifies nostalgia as detrimental, not only to women, but also to those who are not heterosexual. Her text utilises a form of analysis that she describes as the practice of the “interpenetration of materialism with politicised psychoanalysis” (p.67). Champagne rigorously aligns nostalgia with “the catechisms of classical Marxism”, that is with redundancy or naïveté (p.68). Further, she explains how, for the fundamentalist Christian group The Promise Keepers, nostalgia is antifemale.

Hence the Promise Keepers hold strict rules against women working outside of their home or talking back to their husbands. The Promise Keepers work towards the nostalgic return of “the good old days,” the historical and economic time when families were truly private, and when women, protectors of the home and hearth, held no direct link with the public sphere (Champagne 1997: 71).

Rather, Champagne insists that there were no “good old days” for women in hierarchically policed families, but that the “good old days” themselves are an illusion that psychoanalytically consists of the space between a “situated narcissism and ego dystonia” (p.71). This particular reading of nostalgia specifies not only how reactionary groups such as The Promise Keepers appropriate nostalgia, but also how critiques such as Champagne follow them in conflating the idea of nostalgia with conservative ideology.

In the paradigms that Doane and Hodges and Champagne pursue, the term nostalgia is categorically phallogocentric, while their iteration of the construction of nostalgia in terms of gender identity and sexual difference is distinctive. They speak of a female subject of the past, pre-feminism, when being nurturers of men disadvantaged women. On the other hand, they hypothesise a feminist subject who is different from the woman of phallogocentrism. This engagement leaves nostalgia intact as a modern phallogocentric structure, and by excluding the pre-feminist woman, it produces the feminist in the present, who is different from the pre-feminist woman. By positioning

phallogentric nostalgia within feminist rhetoric this engagement with nostalgia constructs the feminist subject who is ostensibly not homesick for that past world of reactionary nostalgias, but who organises present subjectivity by virtue of its opposition to these very precepts.

## **Real Women's Ways**

Other texts engage with nostalgia from a psychoanalytic perspective. In this respect one may encounter such texts from Greene (1991), Jacobus (1993), and Oliver (1997). These writers utilise psychoanalytic discourse to present other versions of interiorised thinking about the past such as 'memory', 'remembrance' and 'ethics', rather than nostalgia.

Gayle Green's essay "Feminist fiction and the uses of memory" (1991) distinguishes between real women's ways of thinking about the past, and conservative modern nostalgia that positions women traditionally as the object of representation. In my view, this text bypasses nostalgia in these attempts to reinscribe meanings and values to ways of thinking about the past that are in keeping with women's experiences. She explores the theme of memory in feminist fiction of the 1970s and works around distinctions found between "feminist memory" and nostalgia. Feminist memory is defined as a political move, "especially important to anyone who cares about change...of particular importance to feminists" (p. 301).

In keeping with this is the idea that nostalgia is a gendered phenomenon constituting both a dangerous and retrograde step for women. The text argues that nostalgia not only means different things to women and men, but also that women have



more motivation to be nostalgic. This is because women have few “outlets” in the present and therefore live more in the past, “which is why they are keepers of diaries, journals, family records, and photograph albums” (p. 296). Greene claims that it is difficult to distinguish between nostalgia and “more productive forms of memory” (p. 297), and suggests that the clearest differentiation between memory and nostalgia is evident when the etymology of each term is investigated.

But the roots of the words suggest different impulses: whereas nostalgia is the desire to return home, “to remember” is “to bring to mind” or “think of again,” to be mindful of,” “to recollect.” Both “remembering” and “recollecting” suggest a connecting, assembling, and a bringing together of things in relation to one another (Greene 1991: 298).

Her text sets up the antithesis between these two concepts, privileging memory as a practice enabling feminists to look back so as to “move forward” and hence to alter the relation of feminists to the present and the future. In contrast to this, nostalgia is vilified as a merely regressive forgetting (p. 298).

Constructing ‘woman’s nostalgia’ in contrast to ‘man’s nostalgia’ and defining nostalgia in women’s terms implies that there is a different practice of nostalgia based on gender difference, which presupposes that there is an enduring biological and essentialist basis for this difference. As Grace argues, “[t]o assert the ontological necessity of a positive presence...involves the assumption of an essence” (2000: 45). Greene valorises women’s ways of thinking about the past, while nostalgia is relegated to the category constituting men’s ways of thinking about the past, a process that attempts to reflect a feminist reality. In other words, by making feminists’ remembering and recollecting positive, and by excluding men’s nostalgia, Greene is articulating a specific female nostalgia, which polarises masculine and feminine ways of thinking about the past, based

on clearly essentialist premises. She substantiates this argument by assigning it to a feminist consciousness motivated by the desire for change.

In “Remembering Medea: the uses of nostalgia” (1992), Susannah Radstone specifies a particular feminist nostalgia for mythical heroines which, in the case of the (then) recent production of the play *Medea* challenge the myth of benign motherhood and pursue “new images, new modes of femininity” (p.55).<sup>3</sup> Characterising texts in which *Medea*, or *Medea*-likenesses, appear both as remembered mother and past self, Radstone develops a dialogue between the concepts “nostalgia” and “remembrance”. She first links the two, describing nostalgia as coming out of remembrance: “the nostalgia produced by remembrance replaces the truth produced by confession” (p.56).

Her text also differentiates between various theories of remembering based on *Medea* as both subject and object of nostalgic desire, while noting the possibilities they each sustain for a new feminist mythology. She cites Jane Flax whose ‘remembered self’ is a self which acknowledges its split-off objects and part objects as part of itself, its core self. Radstone alleges “[r]emembrance must bring to consciousness our autonomous will to mastery, our aggression and our sexuality” (p. 57).

In addition, Radstone valorises Valerie Walkerdine’s ‘memory-work’, which utilises object-relations theory to remember aspects of a forgotten child self and the mythologised mother re-membered as other, and suggests that feminist remembrance may be able to work through feminine desire understood in terms of Lacanian nostalgia.

The idea of ‘working through’ nostalgia is valorised in Radstone’s essay by citing Mary Jacobus’ reading of the poem “Transcendental Etude” (Rich 1978), which is a feminist remembering that both works through, and is sustained by, nostalgia. By

valorising “working through”, and “nostalgic anticipation”, or “half-remembering”, Radstone constructs “fragments of life in the present, from which she can envisage her future” (p. 62).

By directly evoking terms such as *core*, *self*, *consciousness* and *autonomy* in essentialist ways, Radstone’s text reflects the humanist subject of modernity. It specifically generates the terms “working through”, and “nostalgic anticipation”, or “half-remembering”, in opposition to the past, and masculine, or Lacanian nostalgia. From this exclusion, an individual psychoanalytic feminist consciousness is constructed. In keeping with a feminist reading, in search of a different explanation of nostalgia from the Lacanian one, her text generates the terms *remembrance*, *feminist remembrance*, *nostalgic anticipation* and *half remembering*, while resurrecting the *forgotten child self*.

Mary Jacobus’ (1987) essay “Freud’s Mnemonic: Women, Screen Memories and Feminist Nostalgia” provides a psychoanalytic feminist reading that analyses that process of displacement considered foundational to nostalgia for the maternal. The essay first refers to the hidden story of screen memory, which stresses Freud’s own earliest childhood encounters with sexual difference, specifically concerning his mother.<sup>4</sup> The text then traces the historical emergence of psychoanalytic theories of sexuality, “an economy assigning the female to pathos” (p.118).

In Jacobus’ argument, the relegation of the “female to pathos” has repercussions for feminist theory that attempts to construct a mother-centred alternative to the oedipal myth because this can be read as another, albeit feminist, attempt to base concepts of femininity on the mother’s body. Jacobus particularly critiques Adrienne Rich’s “Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution” (1976) for its inherent psychic

utopianism and asks “does feminist theory risk forgetting that every theory is grounded on a fictional moment, and that nostalgia itself is a form of *Nachtraglichkeit* or retroactive construction?” (p.118). The author emphasises that the nostalgia that is especially significant to women is the nostalgia of feminism. In Jacobus’ terms this nostalgia is an alienated need based on the need to forget the irretrievability of the mother as mother. As Irigaray says, in phallocentrism the mother, as phallus is always lost, which inevitably means the alienation of the mother from the sphere of Western culture (1993: 14). Jacobus claims that the text of memory is a device acting as a reminder of the need for reconstituting the past “in which, as women, we both find and lose our forgotten selves” (Jacobus 1987: 138). By arguing that the “forgotten selves” of feminism can be reclaimed through autobiographical memories, Jacobus utilises female desire to contest how psychoanalysis ontologises ‘repressed’ sexual difference and desire for the mother.

Kelly Oliver’s (1997) reading of Derrida’s autobiographical essay “Circumfession” forms an addendum to this, by privileging the terms *remembrance* and *autobiographies of the mother* rather than *nostalgia*. Generating the concept of nostalgia as the “longing for the mother” (p.66), Oliver’s text highlights that the maternal body is a blind spot in Derrida’s writing because of the association of the maternal body with nature or God. It contends that even in Derrida’s most “intimate” work which is to and about his own mother, Georgette Safar Derrida, the “maternal body disappears behind the name, and the mother’s tongue becomes the basis for the social contract” (p.66). According to Oliver, the difference between remembering the mother and nostalgia for the mother is distinguishable and important. This critique again reads the foreclosure of the maternal in nostalgia and reads Derrida’s nostalgia as “the impossible return” (p.66).

On the other hand, Oliver argues that *remembrance* is the autobiographical account of a “desiring speaking subject to whom we are indebted for life” (p.66).

The association of the mother with nature or God is what distinguishes remembrance of the mother from nostalgia for the mother. Nostalgia is always for something that is forever lost because it was never present. Nostalgia for the mother is a longing for an impossible return to the peace of the maternal womb, the silence of the tongue that does not speak, a return to mother-earth associated with the death drive (Oliver 1997: 66).

While critiquing Derrida’s appropriation of nostalgia, Oliver’s text reiterates that the maternal as Nature or God is an impossibility, whereas remembrance is entirely possible and valorisable. This is accomplished by positioning nostalgia in a binary relationship with remembrance, which for her is a more active term.

Jane Gallop’s (1985) critique of Lacan’s essay *The Signification of the Phallus* similarly utilises a critical-historical approach and psychoanalytic theory, but juxtaposes etymology, and French-English language distinctions, in and around Lacan’s own writing, *parole* and his own nostalgia. For my present purpose, I focus on how this text constructs the difference between nostalgia and “threat” in Lacan’s writing, and situates this work historically and etymologically. The first thing to consider is Gallop’s response to Lacan’s phrase, “[h]ere the conjunction is signed between desire inasmuch as the phallic signifier is its mark, and the threat or the nostalgia of the lack-in-having [*manque-a-avoir*]” (Lacan 1877: 694). She explains that

[d]esire can be married to a threat, or it can join a nostalgia instead. If the threat is understood as the male’s castration anxiety, fear of losing what he has as the mother lost hers, then perhaps the nostalgia is the female’s regret for what she does not have (any longer). Man’s desire will henceforth be linked by law to a menace; but women’s desire will legally cohabit with nostalgia: she will not be able to give up her desire for what she can never have (again) (Gallop 1985: 145-6).

The text then comments on the “unusualness” of the term *nostalgia* in Lacan’s statement and cites one other example of its use at the beginning of the essay. This is when Lacan

comments upon the “nostalgia” he experiences rereading “the abandoned discussion on the phallic phase...from 1928-32...consequent upon its American transplantation...” (p.147). According to Gallop, this means “psychoanalysis used to have something which now it has lost. When we see what it had, we (psychoanalysts in 1958, Lacan, readers of the early texts) feel nostalgia” (p.147). Making connections between Lacan’s own nostalgia and the “American transplantation” of psychoanalysis allows Gallop to make the analogy between the fate of psychoanalysis in America, as being castrated or “degraded” female subjectivity, and Lacan’s own nostalgia. Jacobus claims that “it is noteworthy that Lacan’s reaction to the discovery that his ‘alma mater’ is degraded follows the female model: he is not threatened, he is nostalgic” (p.147).

Thus, nostalgia is “not a natural effect of the development of psychoanalysis but rather accompanies a brief moment of introspection, of the *Nachtrag* that Lacan recalls in his introduction to *The Signification of the Phallus*” (p.147). By applying this temporal logic consistently across the text she reads the nostalgia of penis envy as being a retroactive effect rather than accompanying the moment of castration.

In a strategy rather like Freud’s introductory efforts to explain “THE ‘UNCANNY’” (1919), this text focuses on various French (rather than German as in Freud’s case) dictionary definitions of nostalgia and how they are utilised in Lacan’s text. Gallop then argues that the fact that the mother is not phallic means that the mother as mother is lost forever, that the mother as womb, homeland, source, and grounding for the subject is irrevocably past. She writes: “[t]he subject is hence in a foreign land, alienated” (p.148). Hence, desire in Lacanian terms can be read as always based on a need “that finds itself alienated” and “always a state of melancholy or unsatisfied desire” (p.148).

Using this theoretical, autobiographical approach, Gallop's text notes a "third definition – unsatisfied desire" (p.148) as having a lot to do with Lacan's theory of desire, which is to say it cannot be satisfied; "[n]ostalgia is the desire for the indefinable something [*le desir d'on ne sait quoi*]" (p.148). Through reworking psychoanalytic text, Gallop theorises "nostalgia beyond *nostos*, beyond the drive to return" (p. 148) in order to reveal a desire constitutively unsatisfied and unsatisfiable simply because its "object" can never be defined.

Jacobus', Oliver's and Gallop's feminist texts share certain themes. First, each engages with and rejects the writings of the dominant male authors of psychoanalysis, Freud and Lacan, as well as the 'master' of deconstruction, Derrida. They do this by producing biographical information which justifies the claim that there are common points of reference between Freud's, Derrida's and Lacan's personal and theoretical positions regarding their nostalgia (for Freud's and Derrida's mothers), or the "American translation" of psychoanalysis (in Lacan's case).

This feminist trajectory then critiques how psychoanalytic nostalgia predicated on castration produces readings of the maternal and of nostalgia, and claims there are other, feminist ways of thinking about the past. They each construct a feminist ontology and epistemology, based on the exclusion of ideas that are not feminist, by disregarding the specific gendered concepts structuring psychoanalytic nostalgia. The feminist texts specifically reject the psychic utopianism arising from the feminist revision of Oedipal mythology (Jacobus), Derrida's reconceptualisation of the subject other to the ego (Oliver), and Lacan's explanation of castration theory (Gallop). From this position, each constructs an oppositional positive feminist way of thinking about "forgotten selves"

(Jacobus), the mother (Oliver) and nostalgia (Gallop). In Jacobus' text there is the "text of memory" or "autobiographical memories". Oliver valorises "remembrance" and "autobiographies of the mother", and in Gallop's construction, there is the intention to "think nostalgia beyond *nostos*", where *nostos* can be read as the home provided by the maternal body.

In each of these feminist texts there is a feminist subject constructed in the interests of feminist critique: "we, as women" (Jacobus p.138), "a desiring speaking subject" (Oliver p.66), and "[t]he subject is hence in a foreign land, alienated" (Gallop p. 63). Through such strategies, although all three texts seek to articulate nostalgia differently, they remain transfixed by the dichotomous structure male/female, based on the castration, or not, of the subject's sexual identity.

## A Space of Experimentation

In this section, texts by Lynne Huffer, *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures* (1998), and Elspeth Probyn *Outside Belongings* (1996), also problematise modern nostalgia and reconceptualise nostalgia in the interests of lesbian identity (Huffer), and of gay and lesbian identity (Probyn). As Huffer's and Probyn's texts endeavour to redefine nostalgia poststructurally, it is notable that they also both conceive of nostalgia in negative terms. Huffer's text echoes the previous feminist approaches critiquing psychoanalytic nostalgia and feminist revisionism. Her use of the term nostalgia also denotes a back-forming imagination, a mirage and illusion, or a yearning to return to where you never were. In this analysis, woman under patriarchy signifies the reproductive body or mother; and the



nostalgic structure itself is complicit in constituting masculine desire as a dominant structure privileging men over women (Huffer 1998:16).

Huffer specifically critiques matrilineal fiction of the 1970s and 1980s that used the Freudian Oedipal model to develop the reanimation of the pre-Oedipal mother-daughter bond. She argues, “there never was a prior time” (p.19), and then abandons the term *nostalgia* because “the structure underlying nostalgic thinking reinforces a conservative social system”, which upholds the status quo, cuts off change and constitutes a dynamic of inequality (p.19). Concomitantly, the text draws on essentialist discourse to generate a “different model of desire” that is not premised on a “nostalgic structure” but on “lesbian desire”, which she identifies as the desire of one woman for another woman who is not the mother. As well as describing a process that valorises lesbian desire as somehow being outside the heteronormative paradigm generating (masculine) desire, there are attempts to rework the past by denaturalising it and making it transparent. Huffer attempts this by citing Nicole Brossard who, it is claimed, demystifies nostalgia by uncovering and subverting nostalgic structures and exposing the politics of nostalgic origin myths, which is exactly what Huffer’s text has done.

What happens next however shifts this text substantively from the reframing of psychoanalytic theories proposed by the feminists discussed formerly. In place of modern nostalgia, Huffer explains how Brossard conceptualises a hologram that pluralises memory, creates coexistent realities, and contains plurality, multiple origins and multiple futures, while exposing what is underneath the here and now, and exploring the layers constituting identities so that memories and realities coexist (p.133). The holographic image reflects attempts to replace the lost mother as a ground for rethinking sexual

difference by theorising feminist or emancipatory politics. There is not an attempt to rework nostalgia itself, but following Seyla Benhabib's ethical model that also contains nostalgia, and "like other theories of an ethics of care" (p.136), Huffer argues that feminism must differentiate between nostalgia and ethics. Rather than resignifying nostalgia, this text calls nostalgia conservative and dangerous to feminism. On the other hand, a holographic ethic is deemed to more fruitfully generate feminist epistemology and ontology figuring the relationship of subjectivity and the past.

While the holographic metaphor gives Huffer a way to 'reconceptualise' the past by stressing the accessibility and multiple facets of that past, the replacement of nostalgia with holographic ethics is a similar manoeuvre to the poststructural feminist texts previously cited. Hence, like the others I have critiqued, this text can be read as attempting to drain nostalgia of its problematic status by valorising feminine, or lesbian feminist, ways of thinking about the past, which ultimately has the effect of transfixing nostalgia according to the very binaries that inform patriarchal interests.

There is nothing new about Huffer's effort to substantiate a feminist way of thinking about the past; she simply rejects nostalgia as a negative force for women and makes memory positive. What is startling and significant is how this text reconceptualises memory. As we have heard, this is achieved by drawing upon Brossard's techno-scientific construct conceptualising a hologram that constructs a "holographic ethic", where memories and realities coexist, where there is mutual reciprocity and co-existence, and open dialogic and heterogeneous memories that are able to accommodate irreducible differences.

Notions of heterogeneity and co-existence are also central to Elspeth Probyn's (1996) approach to nostalgic origins and subjectivity, which is pursued as a critique of how childhood is thematised in gay and lesbian fiction. Her text particularly critiques qualitative research concerning the connections between lesbian and gay identity and childhood recollections which, it is claimed here, are used by psycho-scientific research to pathologise childhood (pp. 103-111). Probyn's interest is to rework the dimensions of past and present through nostalgia itself so that childhood can be used for other things apart from an originary source, which is its most prevalent representation. Citing Foucault (1994) and Bellour (1989), Probyn argues that the distancing function of fiction disturbs any chronological ordering of life and being and she stresses the importance of generating nostalgia "not as a guarantee of memory but an errant logic that goes astray" (p.103). Thus nostalgia for an irretrievable childhood is freed of its "moorings in time," and upsets the naturalness of heterosexual and generational ordering, as well as the space/time of childhood, as it constructs a space of experimentation (p.116).

To substantiate this reconceptualisation, Probyn argues that the tensions inherent in nostalgia's etymological movement from an objective state, to pathologisation, to its interiorisation as neurosis, means that nostalgia today is "free to wander" (p.116). The suggested method of achieving this is to conceptualise childhood differently, as an "event" (p.116), "dissolving the pretence of truth in sexuality" (p.116). As "a heterogeneous ensemble of discourses and relations [it is possible] to move childhood from being a beginning, to deny childhood its founding status" (p.116). She further argues that it is vital to seize remembered images from the reality of childhood; "[i]t is

from this real that we seek to construct the possible, a real that cannot be known solely through statistics and quantitative studies” (p.117).

Reconceptualising nostalgia in this way includes rethinking the movement or mobilisation of nostalgia that displaces the cause-effect factor, so that nostalgia does more than just reproduce the present as an effect of the past, of past causes. According to Probyn, this nostalgia, through an amalgam of Bergson and Deleuze, is a place where the past “is redirected alongside contradiction so that contradiction and recollection exist simultaneously” (p.118). Hence Probyn valorises a conceptualisation of nostalgia that twists and turns inside out and outside in, in the form of a Moebius strip that refuses depth and draws everything to the surface, while spreading the past across a flexible present. Her reformulation makes the passage of time tangible, commingles time, childhood, history and passion, and creates a frisson of surfaces bound to the body (p.118).<sup>5</sup> The reconceptualised past itself constitutes a political tactic to denaturalise normative childhood beginnings. Although the ‘real’ can never be recuperated, the beginnings and memories of childhood can be turned and placed on the surface of the real and the possible, in a present where childhood is suspended.

What I want is a present where childhood is freed from its moral strictures, where children and adults are not stifled by the confines of a policed family, where grownups can write childhood, live childhood, in whatever order we wish...where images of childhood slowly brush up against other images, where the past quickens the lust for the present and for the possible (Probyn 1996: 122-3).

By positing the multi-dimensionality of childhood beginnings, Probyn constructs a space that repudiates chronological ground. Unlike the previous feminist literature about nostalgia, this text does not reconceptualise nostalgia solely in terms of sexual difference or gender identity. Importantly for thinking about the adult/child dichotomies of New

Zealand women's nostalgia, Probyn deconstructs the dichotomies of age and time (child/adult, then/now, and past/present) in the interests of lesbian and queer politics. Her longing is to engender "the becoming other of ourselves and of the social that we inhabit" (p.15). Here childhood constitutes neither origins nor beginning, but "beginnings that are constantly wiped out, forcing me to begin again and again" (p.101).

It is significant that the terms, visualisations and vocabularies governing nostalgia in Huffer's and Probyn's texts reflect recent advances in technology. It is salient here to draw upon Grace's critique of Rosi Braidotti (2000: 54). In discussing Braidotti's concept of nomadism, Grace's engagement leads to a vital point in my discussion of the poststructural feminist dialogue with nostalgia. Grace notes a direction in feminist discourse wherein theoretical engagements are "actually reflecting uncritically, and unwittingly key dimensions of the hyperreal world, rather than containing the subversive and critical import they contend" (p. 55). She asserts further, that with "the decline of the real, we only have the *mise-en-scene* of power, which is itself a sign of its disappearance" (p.70). For Grace, this is the concept Baudrillard deploys to explain the density of the present social order where "the escalating accumulation of signs, life, identity, proliferating in their positivity is [indeed] a crushing spectacle" (p.70). It explains too, the "weightlessness" felt by living in a world where the oppositional power relations that structured feminist critique have finished, or evolved into simulation (p.70).

To examine how Huffer's and Probyn's texts might provide a commentary about this very phenomenon rather than reiterate specific political and conceptual positions, let us consider the terms constructing their arguments and situate these alongside other theorists supporting Baudrillard's and Grace's contentions. Huffer's trope of the

hologram, and a holographic ethic, utilises the terms constructing Celeste Olalquiaga's "postmodern confusion of time and space" (1992: 19). Here,

temporal continuity collapses into extension and spatial dimension is lost to duplication, [and] transforms urban culture into a gigantic hologram capable of producing any image within an apparent void (Olalquiaga 1992: 19).

For Olalquiaga, the increasingly swift interchangeability of signs in postmodernity means that cultural signs that "functioned as indexes of a particular cultural identity now float freely as commodities, their ethnic quality further soliciting market voraciousness and enhancing their value" (p.19).

Régis Debray (1993) is another theorist who stresses how this kind of reconceptualisation is founded on technological advances in the reproduction of reality, from the "graphosphere" to the "videosphere" (1993: 74-5). This "videosphere" has installed "another reality" that can be apprehended instantly and without the need for interpretation, for there is no longer any distinction between the medium and what is represented (p.31). This certainly resonates with Baudrillard and is paradigmatic of simulation and sign-value, for example McLuhan's (1964) work proclaiming, "the medium is the message".

It might be argued that Probyn's theories echo these analyses of contemporary culture by conceptualising the refusal of "chronological ground" (p.122), "the becoming other of ourselves and of the social that we inhabit", and "extending childhood as a repeatable point of beginning" (p.122). All of these phrases could readily be applied to the now commonplace experience where images of childhood and adulthood are digitised, played, replayed, and edited, removing and reapplying images at will. Moreover "the very suspension of childhood" (p.123), brings to mind commodity

capitalism, where advertisements exhort women to look younger, firmer, to be playful. For example, amongst the advertisements in the first issue of *The Oprah Magazine* childhood is a conspicuous focus of consumerism. Here children wear ‘adult’ *Calvin Klein* labels, women are told to “erase time, alter perception, create a new reality” (advertisement for *Saks Fifth Avenue*), and a *Sears* advertisement shows a woman/child playing on a child’s swing. As Paul Virilio suggests, we are no longer able to evaluate to what extent our notions of the real have been remade.

All that is left is a mental confusion of near and far, present and future and real and unreal. What we have today is the mixing of history, of histories, and the hallucinating Utopia implanted by techniques of communication (Virilio 1993: 55).

To further advance the argument that these feminist texts attest to Baudrillard’s claim that all boundaries between reality and illusion have collapsed into simulation, I want to draw parallels between the terms Huffer and Probyn use to ‘reconceptualise’ subjectivity, and Emily Martin’s (1994) insights into current phenomena. Martin alleges that the terms “flexibility” and “adaptability” reflect how we are valued by society; in other words, these attributes have become valued commodities within the corporate culture (p. 249).

## **Synthetic and Substantive Nostalgias**

Finally in this section I consider feminist engagement with nostalgia from the field of anthropology by Marilyn Strathern (1995) and Debora Battaglia (1997). These texts reflect theories of nostalgia within the terms of postcolonial and postmodern discourse.

Battaglia’s (1995) essay “On Practical Nostalgia: self-prospecting among urban Trobrianders” argues that the relations of nostalgia to postcolonial rhetoric of identity

critiques the assumptions of literature (from anthropology and cultural studies) that nostalgia has a categorically negative social value for the indigenous performer. Following Trinh Minh-Ha (1987), this text suggests instead that nostalgia is less intrinsic to nativism and less indicative of a lack of critical distance on the self and the sources of cultural identity than presumed. In these terms, nostalgia may rather be a “vehicle of knowledge than a yearning for something lost” (p.77). The suggestion here is that rather than signifying a useless longing for a past world of meaning lacking in the present, nostalgia may be read as a beneficial practice. Especially when those practicing nostalgia attach appropriate feelings to their own “histories, products and capabilities” while generating “detachment from – and active resistance to – disempowering conditions of postcolonial life” (p. 77). By reading nostalgia as a worthwhile embodied practice occurring in the Trobriand Islander’s practice of yam growing, Battaglia’s text attempts to dissociate nostalgia from sentimental associations.

The text categorises two types of nostalgia; the first is *synthetic* and historically modern: it mourns what is missing from the present and “creates representations of that past” (p.78). The second is *substantive*, whereby the text operates in a performative sense. Here, “a practical or active nostalgia” consists of “transformative action with a connective purpose; and the affective and aesthetic quality of an indulgence” (p.78). This is nostalgia for a sense of future and an experience, no matter how imaginary, which contains the means of controlling the future, and which may work as a means of instigating social reconnection (p.78).

The active experience of nostalgia, such as yam cultivation, politically and aesthetically acts as a supplement so that the nostalgia enables a man to experience more of himself and his relational activity, is in his person more culturally located. Yams, then, as much grow their subjects as the other way around (Battaglia 1995: 80).



The significant point here is how Battaglia reads gardening as a personal and cultural product rather than as a mechanistic practice. The embodied nostalgic practice of urban yam growing and the competition this engenders enables nostalgia to generate a 'joke' of identity, as well as aesthetic self-practices. This theorisation of nostalgia does not subvert authentic engagement, or engender a yearning for something real or authentic that is unachievable, but generates a productive, personal engagement.

From the poststructural critique of identity which incorporates multiple, fluid identities, subjects or selfhood, Battaglia's text uses the term *substantive* nostalgia to challenge notions of an integral coherent self, or universal, transhistorical self, seeking wholeness or completeness. The text also reflects postcolonial discourse where, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) the indigenous body is a material text demonstrating how subjectivity "is 'felt' as inescapably material and permanent" (p.184). Indeed, post-colonial theory stresses how the discursive forces of imperial power worked on and through people" (p.184). By rejecting *synthetic* nostalgia, Battaglia's text constructs a postcolonial consciousness centred on material and performative identities that allows for various reconfigurations of self and enables indigenous subjects to occupy 'multiple sites' in culture and in history.

Marilyn Strathern's essay "Nostalgia and the New Genetics" (1995) traverses similar territory while discussing the effect of new genetics on understandings of identity. She argues that "in the context of arguments about genetic innovation, culture itself, and this is the force of the argument about cultural variability, seems lost in the sense of loss it conveys" (p.109-10). This sense of loss is the alienation induced by the encounter between genetic engineering and traditional notions of cultural identity and difference.

Strathern's theorisation of the nostalgia generated by recent scientific innovation is crucial to my concerns. The text cites Roland Robertson and Frederic Jameson who suggest that culture "is a 'privileged area in which to witness' the current appetite for images of the past" (p.110). Robertson specifically critiques the synthetic nostalgia built into the origins of sociology advanced in late-twentieth-century discussions of the past. The result, he claims, is seen in nostalgic theories about the present, generating a "wilful synthetic nostalgia from social theory amounting to something like the global institutionalisation of the nostalgic attitude" (p.110). He argues that nostalgia, denoting a negative and deliberate evasion of the present, should be eliminated from social theory as analysis, and thematised as the object of social analysis, thus generating the need for "a theory of nostalgia"(p.110).

Strathern makes it clear that although cross-cultural nostalgia is impossible, a bifurcated structure of nostalgia can be supported by the following argument. If "culture" can be mobilised to convey a sense of loss, "cultural analysis" suggests that the one thing we have not lost is a sense of nostalgia. The Euro-American nostalgia that Robertson calls synthetic is nostalgia for "past conceptual systems, for cherished values, for kinds of behaviour, that is, for 'tradition' or for 'culture'" (p.110).

But Euro-Americans also have nostalgia for persons and places and land. While we might imagine that we can share other person's nostalgia for a vanishing culture, we cannot share it for the particular persons they miss or the places they have left. Here your (their) nostalgia is most emphatically not my (our) nostalgia (Strathern 1995: 110-11).

Here, the text distinguishes between the synthetic Euro-American nostalgia for "culture", and a substantive Euro-American nostalgia that is experienced for people and places they miss. Strathern claims that synthetic nostalgia mourns for what is missing from the present, and represents the past as the place where what is gone was once present. Only if

a break is evident can nostalgia be overcome to some extent by irony; “[w]e can rejoice or regret, but what is always reinforced is the passing of tradition. So the past itself acquires its presence, in this mode, by being the subject of representation” (Strathern 1997: 112).

Like Battaglia’s, Strathern’s text also differentiates between substantive and synthetic nostalgia, especially arguing how *synthetic* nostalgia is a culturally prevalent miasma for bygone cultures and is to be avoided. On the other hand, *substantive* nostalgia is positive, and, while making no particular present, apprehends the endurance of past ideas, the always-present effect of relationships, and the necessary contemporaneity of working through origins as part of a modern worldview. She suggests that late-twentieth-century discourse “heavy with the newness of the present” has difficulty conceptualising substantive nostalgia because it “continually asserts the breaks with the past that recreates all nostalgia as synthetic nostalgia” (p.113).

It is evident here that these texts constitute a departure within nostalgic discourse. By categorising performative/positive and synthetic/negative nostalgias organised along traditional or indigenous versus simulated and postmodern lines, both Battaglia and Strathern reflect the nostalgia of indigenous and colonial relationships to the past within a postmodern hyperreal world. This discussion can be situated amidst wider feminist debate echoing Karen Fog Olwig and Kirsten Harstrup’s (1997) claim that in spite of living in a global context the concept of specific cultural wholes is “very much with us”. Citing Strathern (1993), they argue that cultural difference “seems to be on the agenda all over the world, as some kind of totalizing reference point” (p. 3).

At the same time that the anthropological profession experiences a loss of faith in this concept of culture, it has become embraced by a wide range of culture builders world wide. The paradoxical result is that anthropological works are increasingly being

consulted by people desiring to construct cultural identities of a totalizing sort which the anthropologist finds deeply problematic. (Olwig and Harstrup 1997: 3).

What are the lines of poststructural feminist theorisation that reverberate most closely with my prefaced experience of nostalgia as an embodied poetic rendering of meaningful childhood? The first is Probyn's theorisation of childhood, although it has been argued that this text reflects rather than reconceptualises the transformation of childhood into signs that circulate within a logic of difference. Her concept of nostalgia as "a line of recollection" *and* "millions of vibrations" (p.118), *and* "the frisson of surface rubbing surface...tied to the body" (p. 121) that somehow resists heteronormative disempowerment, indubitably connects with my Preface. Probyn's and my texts also resonate with those of Battaglia and Strathern. For the latter, the heterogeneity of nostalgia enables it to be constituted as an embodied theory, which can be read as "a vehicle of knowledge" as well as being a beneficial practice that somehow actively resists postcolonial disempowerment (p.77).

Probyn's valorisation of the materiality of nostalgia, and Strathern and Battaglia's anthropological accounts, support my contention that nostalgia is a worthy theoretical issue. The anthropological literature is not so much a complete valorisation of nostalgia *per se* but rather a critique of what is called synthetic nostalgia, while arguing for substantive or a type of performative nostalgia. While organised in what is to all intents and purposes a dichotomous framework, what is invaluable to this exploration of nostalgia within the context of New Zealand culture is that anthropological feminist literature generates categories connecting nostalgia to the critique of the current commodification of difference.

## Summary of Literature Review

The literature review in the last two chapters identifies key strands of theorisation that inform both the rationale and direction of this exploration of nostalgia. The first strand is Baudrillardian, in that it problematises the sign systems that hyperrealise experiences in the interests of contemporary late-capitalism. The notion of “symbolic exchange” as a critical perspective on this consumerist milieu is also important. Facing the reiterated yearning that so preoccupies attempts to theorise nostalgia, be it for a home, for childhood, or the past, Baudrillard’s concept of symbolic exchange provides a refreshing way of theorising cultural forms in a way that might highlight the relationship of this yearning to the codified structures of the contemporary west.

Grace’s application of Baudrillard’s theories to gender analysis provide the resources to read nostalgia in a way that avoids the dichotomous subject/object structures of poststructural engagement by focusing on “the myriad of singularities that remain irreducible to codification, models, and simulation” (Grace 2000: 191). Such a focus has directed recognition upon the salience of Kristeva’s reading of Proust as an embodied phenomenology, which analyses the relationship between nostalgia, embodied sensation and signs. This trajectory augments the approach undertaken by Probyn, Battaglia and Strathern. The next chapter focuses upon the actual methodologies indicated by my reading of these literatures.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The most ubiquitous backward glances in my undergraduate courses went to writers including Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Olive Schreiner, Alexandra Kollantia, Emma Goldman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Mary Wollstonecraft.

<sup>2</sup> Irigaray's use of the term "Symbolic Order" is Lacanian and entirely different from Baudrillard's use of the term "symbolic". As Grosz explains, in Lacanian usage, the Symbolic refers to "the organisation of the social order according to the imperatives of paternal authority...regulated by the law of the father... [I]t [also] refers to the order of language considered as a rule-governed system of signification, organised with reference to 'I', the speaking subject...[and finally] insofar as the father's law not only regulates social exchange, but also requires the child's repression of its incestual, pre-oedipal love relations, the symbolic structures the unconscious.... The symbolic is the order of law, language and exchange, and is founded on the repression of the imaginary" (1989: xxiii).

<sup>3</sup> This is a feminist revisionist production of *Medea*, a Greek tragedy by Euripides, which was originally produced in 431 BCE. It concerns Medea who is an enchantress and the daughter of the King, whose fury at her husband's abandonment of her leads her to kill her own children "partly to make [her husband] Jason childless and partly because, ...they now must surely die" (Howatson and Chilvers 1993: 337).

<sup>4</sup> Freud explains that "screen memories" are those that are preserved because of "an associative relation between their content and another which is repressed" (Freud 1965:63).

<sup>5</sup> Probyn claims that this kind of nostalgia is literalised in the play *La maison suspendu* (The Suspended House) where three generations and three time periods coexist, weaving amongst each other and speaking across the generations, commingling virtual and actual choices that "brush against each other" (Probyn 1996: 121).

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

[F]eminist knowledge is rooted in imaginative connection and hard-won, practical coalition – which is not the same thing as identity but does demand self-critical situatedness and historical seriousness (Haraway 1997: 199).

This chapter engages with key aspects of the methodology employed to address my questions about nostalgia.<sup>1</sup> To make the methodology as transparent as possible, I firstly consider each of the three focal points or key dimensions of concern raised in the Introduction. The methodologies constituting the remainder of this chapter then effectively emerge out of the need to address those key dimensions. These methodologies include the sections (a) poststructural methodology, (b) postcolonial methodology – with a subsection concerning conducting research with Maori women – and (c), a cultural phenomenology of embodied experience.

Throughout this chapter, there is some of the melange of epistemologies and ontologies informing critical scholarship itself. There is a common emphasis characterising poststructuralist critique concerning scepticism about the prospect of universal, inclusive or comprehensive knowledge-claims that neglect the specific social context and position of the knower. The metacritical approach undertaken here accordingly includes the dynamics of “situated knowledges and critical reflexivity” (Haraway 1997: 37). This involves taking a critical approach to critical practices themselves, an ongoing process of critical inquiry that is never foreclosed. Indeed, radical epistemology, as Radhakrishnan (1996) uses this term, presumes that the more a subject produces knowledge about itself, the less it is able to assume political agency on behalf of that knowledge.

According to Radhakrishnan: “Radical epistemology produces the deconstructive knowledge that the very basis upon which the subject acts is putative, not real; constructed, not natural” (p. 2). Ultimately, this methodological problem generates theory that does not privilege “answers and resolutions” but pursues an epistemology that is dangerous, questioning, and warns that what we might “next know” may be a threat to what we “now know” (p. 21). The methodologies chosen here lend leverage to “critical interpretation, and critical inquiry about positioning and location; that is the condition of articulation, embodiment and mortality” (Haraway 1997: 37).

## **Key Dimensions of Methodology**

### **Epistemologies, Ontologies, Standpoints**

As outlined in Chapter One – Introduction, the plan of engagement with nostalgia in this thesis has meant carrying out two connected, but distinct, research projects, which together concentrate upon three focal points.

***Point 1. An exploration of the historical construction of the meanings of nostalgia within authoritative Western literatures.***

In making the critical analysis of historical texts a part of this project, it is important that the historical texts selected for critique are those that have informed authoritative discourse in Aotearoa/New Zealand throughout the lifetimes of the research participants. For example, the post-war generation in 1950s New Zealand learnt about ‘yearning for the past’ in religious texts at school assemblies, at Church, on the marae, or when Roman



and Greek mythology was read in girlhood classrooms, or referenced in poetry or grammar texts. In recognition of this, Chapter Four is concerned to analyse how ancient and classical text reflect authoritative Greek, Roman and Judaeo-Christian nostalgias. Both Maori and Pakeha girls also grew up regulated by the epistemologies and ontologies of the psychosciences. Consequently, Chapter Five focuses upon the medicalisation of nostalgia in the seventeenth century, while in Chapter Six, *The Techniques of Psy*, there is a reading of nostalgia in Freudian text. Analysis of more recent historical explanations of nostalgia in Aotearoa/New Zealand, including Maori and settler accounts, is found in Chapter Seven.

In a way this Gender Studies research project is both academic in an Arts sense and empirical in a Sciences sense. Unlike more traditional academic research procedure that sets up a problematic through the analysis of literature by way of background, I here explore my problematic both through analyses of selected contemporary and historical literature, as well as the analysis of contemporary women's narrative. The historical analysis is very much a part of the empirical material dealt with. Thus, the project as a whole involves backgrounding the research analysing specifics of the talk of nostalgia today, here and now, in this place New Zealand, in terms of its relatedness to the key contextual discourses discussed in the more historically focused literature and the contemporary literature considered in Chapters One and Two.

*Point 2. Designing and implementing qualitative research to generate narrative accounts of contemporary women's nostalgia in Aotearoa/New Zealand.*

The second research component influenced the collection and analysis of the nostalgias of New Zealand women born in the 1950s. In keeping with feminist imperatives, for example Brown (1995), Rich (1975), Minh-ha (1989), Lorde (1984), the ubiquity of political and socio-psychological practices that disadvantage women necessitates fashioning places for research purposes where a diverse range of women's voices might be heard. My recognition of this in designing qualitative research prioritising the words of women of 'my generation' addresses my commitment to creatively theorise how social practices in New Zealand resonate within late-capitalism. This also means that as a critical researcher I bring political awareness to my work in constructing a conceptual space to explore how the meanings of nostalgia are made. Such exploration includes the meanings specific to individual women, specific communities, and ethnic groupings. It means paying attention to changes in meaning over time, dominant fields of meaning, and contradictions in meaning. Indeed, one of the strengths of critical research lies in its ability to be open to contradictions and conflicts within collaborative practices.

The central undertaking has involved interviewing twenty women who were born here in the late 1940s and have since lived in New Zealand. This procedure elaborates and investigates "theoretical knowledge of the social processes that are generating the data we create through the research process" (Grace 1998: 115). Further, as Grace argues,

we really generate or create, rather than collect, data; the material we analyse obtains its meaning in the context of the specific politics of the research question and research process (Grace 1998: 115).

In reference to Haraway's theory of 'situated knowledges', this critical approach has meant situating the participants' texts within the field of discourses constructing them. Researchers, activists, informants, and other audiences are engaged as critical participants in what Haraway calls "power-sensitive conversations":

Above all, rational knowledge does not pretend to disengagement: to be from everywhere and so nowhere, to be free from interpretation, from being represented, to be fully self-contained or fully formalizable. Rational knowledge is a process of ongoing critical interpretation among "fields" or interpreters and decoders. Rational knowledge is power-sensitive conversation. Decoding and transcoding plus translation and criticism; all are necessary (Haraway 1988: 590)

The methodological approach used here is diverse and has evolved over the duration of the project. My intention has been that the analysis must be sufficiently explicit so that others can retrieve the original analytic procedures and decisions. Other readers would possibly make different interpretations of the original transcripts, but the systematic description of the specific research process I developed means that I can be accountable for these particular readings, and other readers can evaluate my account. Further, by placing this historically and qualitatively based research within the critical methodologies discussed here, there is an easy progression to an analytic method of interpreting discourse.

***Point 3. Consideration of the critical potential of nostalgia to articulate and address the conditions of women's lives in the contemporary milieu.***

The key methodology used throughout my analysis to address this third focal point is the critical theoretical positioning engendered by Baudrillard's concept of symbolic exchange. Because of the temporal nature of nostalgia, a prominent methodological

concern has been to contemplate the world of today from a standpoint constituting optimal critical leverage. This was provided by contemplating how yearnings for ‘home’, be it for childhood, or for the past, which so preoccupy attempts to theorise nostalgia might be read when juxtaposed with postmodernity. The vital factor concerning the realm of “symbolic exchange” when taken as a critical standpoint is its efficacy in critiquing the code upon which both contemporary economic value and signification depend (Grace 2000: 18).

A concluding methodological concern reflects upon the many terms used to talk about human life encountered throughout these chapters. I want to be clear that the position taken here is that the ‘self’, or any of the following list of analogous terms, is regarded throughout this dissertation as a psychoscientific, or philosophical construct, with profoundly problematic implications. As Zaner points out, this field includes “self, spirit, soul, psyche, subjectivity, subject, inner man [sic], person, mind, consciousness, mental substance, ego, monad, transcendental unity of apperception, *Da-sein*, *pour-soi*, *être-au-monde*, agent, transcendental ego” (Zaner 1981: 112). Following Baudrillard’s notion of “symbolic exchange” I perceive this as designating “the fantastic autonomisation of the economy raised to the level of the reality principle” and rationalised (Baudrillard 1993: 237).

The need to address the three key focal points explained in this section leads to a discussion of various methodological approaches that include (a) Poststructural Methodology, (b) Postcolonial Methodology, and (c) A Cultural Phenomenology of Embodied Experience.

### **(a) Poststructural Methodology**

Here, I discuss some of the key poststructural epistemologies and ontologies that have informed my methods of generating and analysing data. Techniques of discourse analysis, or semiotics, and post-phenomenology are discussed to describe how my analysis of the historical texts and of the women's transcripts, which are understood as complementary procedures, have utilised these. It must be clarified here, that although I strategically apply poststructural analyses, these are understood as complementary to my postphenomenological and Baudrillardian methodologies. The limiting aspect of poststructuralism is that it reiterates the codified logic of meaning (the dichotomous separation of identity/difference, signifier/signified) that is the precondition for economic exchange.

A poststructuralist ontology, postulating the social construction of reality through a critical rendition of the idea that meaning obtains through language and not through its relation to an extradiscursive world, only goes part of the way. It still posits the inevitability of this linguistic structuration, of the Law, of the binary structuring of meaning where deconstruction remains in the realm of the semiotic, and is of uncertain import. Materialising the world through a representational linguistics (reference or no reference) works against the seductive interplay of signs (Grace 2000: 143).

Poststructuralism is informed by a diverse group of mainly French theorists who introduced the poststructural critiques of essentialism and humanism to the fields of psychoanalysis, Marxism, the history of ideas, linguistics, anthropology and, consequently, feminism. As a critical extension of structuralism, poststructuralism particularly engages the linguistic theories of Saussure (1959), arguing that language consists of signs, and is an entire signifying system generating meaning within a dichotomous structure of identity/difference. This differentiates signs from each other at

the same time as constituting the 'identity' of each sign.<sup>2</sup> In the work of theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Lacan, the Cartesian subject, the autonomous, humanist 'self consciousness' producing language, action, and meaning, is replaced by the concept of intersubjectivity.<sup>3</sup> This means that subjectivity is understood as generated by, rather than being reflected in, the socio-cultural organisation of language, or discourse. The concept of subjectivity makes the relationship between the individual and language problematic because it replaces the idea of 'human nature' with the concept of the production of the human subject through ideology, discourse or language.

Consequently, a substantial part of poststructural methodology concerns *discourse analysis*, a term generated by this tradition of continental social philosophy and cultural analysis, especially from Foucault. Critical discourse analysis is founded on developments in linguistic theory, literary analysis and semiology, such as semantics, pragmatics and ethnomethodology. It concerns analysis of the dialectical relationship between language and social structure, where pragmatic differences are understood to be generated by socio-economic forces and institutions, as well as being practices that are instrumental in generating and legitimating these forces and institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Foucault's conflation of the autonomisation of the self and the political requisites of contemporary governmentality means that certain ideals of the 'self' are linked to certain forms of authority. These influence the lives and behaviours of individuals to provoke the optimal conditions for the achievement of health, happiness, wealth and tranquillity. For example, as I consider the problem of the nostalgic western woman today, her striving for autonomy, responsibility, choice and happiness may not appear to be related to hegemonic regulation in New Zealand. In Foucault's analysis however, the

form this self takes is undeniably linked or connected to processes of governmentality; including schools, hospitals, training institutions, the media, and indeed all of the forms of governance that shape contemporary experience.

A prime theoretical trajectory informing my analyses is Nikolas Rose's (1996) neo-Foucaultian approach. Rose downplays the concept of 'subjectivity', being more concerned with how the diversity of tactics of subjectification has taken place at different times in relation to the classification and differentiation of persons (p.142). He explains how practices such as nostalgia are 'technological' because they draw people together in keeping with certain goals. He asks, "[i]n what ways and with what consequences are our contemporary notions of subjective autonomy and enterprise embodied within the regulatory practices of a distinctively 'modern' form of life?" (p.153). In this view, how humans give meaning to experience consists of a history of 'meaning production', including "grids of visualisation, vocabularies, norms and systems of judgement" that produce experience, rather than themselves being produced by experience (p. 130).

This means that it has been important to be aware of the 'languages of personhood' that have taken shape within nostalgic discourse. For example, the 'interiority' which might seem to be part of a psychological system is instead understood as "a kind of infolding of exteriority", where things that can acquire authority become "the instruments through which being constitutes itself in different practices and relations" (p.143). In these terms, nostalgia is not an interiorised 'psychological capacity' but rather is itself generated through rituals such as storytelling, which are supported through artefacts such as photograph albums (p.143). Focussing upon authorities, rituals and technologies rather than what Foucault calls power informs both my historical and

qualitative projects. I particularly question how the nostalgic mentalities – skills of reading, memory, rhetoric and writing, act to authorise particular behaviours in the service of particular objectives. In this kind of investigation, women's nostalgia is embodied within complex technical and practical associations that discursively generate subject positions.

Semiotic analysis includes scrutinising linguistic content and form in collusion with social and sociological questions, in accordance with Haraway's notion of situated knowledges.

“our” [meaning enquiring feminist] problem, is how to have *simultaneously* an account of the radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own “semiotic technologies” for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a “real” world (Haraway 1988: 579).

Such critical practice concentrates on the general resources used to construct discourses and to enable the enactment of particular actions or interpretative repertoires maintaining social practices. The analysis looks at the specific procedures through which discourse is constructed and made to appear factual. Following Fairclough (1992), semiotic analysis means asking the following questions: is there a stylistic pattern (such as metaphors, questions, or laughter)? Is there a contextual pattern or a pattern of ideational meaning? What discourses are drawn upon and are they relatively conventional or innovative? How heterogeneous and ambivalent is the text? Is the discourse representation direct or indirect?

Derrida indicates that subjectivity is continuously deferred according to the reading of signifiers that adhere to the values held or fixed within specific communities. His approach to text undermines any idea of a fixed subject, and challenges the western



‘metaphysics of presence’, by pointing out that not only does the name (the signifier) come before the thing (the signified) itself, but that difference, or the spacing or distance between these, is significant. This means that the human subject’s nostalgic experiences are grounded by what Derrida calls *différance*; indeed the terms *différance* and *supplément* are important Derridean concepts. *Différance* is the infinite displacement and deferral of meaning inherent in language, and *supplément* refers to what can always be read against what a text intends to say. Derrida’s insights challenge how logocentrism and the structure of binary oppositions, that fix traditional epistemologies of the self and identity, are understood.

Methodologically, this has meant a semiotic investigation of the structure of binary oppositions that nostalgic text might rely upon. It has meant analysing how the historical texts and the women’s transcribed nostalgic narratives make claims to reality and truth, and simultaneously conceal how they do this. Indeed what binaries are important to the very concept of nostalgia? Throughout semiotic analysis, the logic of oppositions is made salient by identifying conflicting forces of signification within the text itself. I have accordingly identified how the intrinsic properties of language complicate any idea of textual unity. Instead processes of selection and repression position the specific ideas a text proposes. This sets feelings, ideas, arguments and values jockeying for position.

To read in this way has been to direct attention towards the formation of the structures of text and traces within that. Ironically, there is also one’s awareness of the fact that the nostalgia we construct as a reader of any nostalgic text is itself a nostalgic construction. This is because the very act of constructing a text presupposes that the

speaker or writer is no longer there. By understanding that texts are always readable in the absence of the writer or speaker (in the case of transcribed interviews), we can understand how they are open to analysis entirely outside the bounds of their generative force.

The method of analysis developed in this research is also complemented by Kristeva's and Cixous' analytic theories. Kristeva's use of the term semiology to describe her approach to textual analysis is defined as "a diverse and polyvalent approach to different discursive practices, each of which implies a particular situation for the speaking subject and a particular set of signifying articulations" (1996: 180). For Kristeva, analysis is the study of both the constitution and the deconstruction of the text, and of the *différance* within the text. As Grosz explains:

Unlike Derridean deconstruction, Kristeva is interested in textual play in the interaction of discursive and subjective economies, their mutual dependence and problematisation...She [also] raises the crucial question of politics ...[and] broader questions of social struggle and change (Grosz 1989 p.61).

I am most interested in looking at how the grammatical items/structures in the women's texts position women in the world today. Indeed, within the construction of nostalgic narrative, what is the signification that women invest in their psychocultural milieu?

By considering Kristeva's theories of the subject-in-process, one can read nostalgia itself as a series of heterogeneous and fluid memories, times, processes, practices and meanings, which itself subverts the traditions of structuralist theory. Her analysis of human subjectivity proposes "this expanded theory of signification [which] cannot give itself new objects except by positing itself as nonuniversal; that is, by presupposing that a questionable subject-in-process exists in an economy of discourse

other than that of thetic consciousness” (Kristeva 1980: 146). Kristeva’s claims are based on the recognition that language has two functions. The first, called the semiotic is discussed further in Chapter Nine and includes drives and impulses, and the second is the symbolic function, encompassing familial and societal structures. In language these two “dispositions” combine in various ways to “constitute various types of discourse, types of signifying practices” (p.134).

In Kristeva’s account, the semiotic tends to characterise poetic language and is greatly reduced in scientific discourse. The semiotic process ensures that the subject can never be seen as unified, rational and in control, but is only ever momentarily fixed: a subject-in-process (p.134-5). The ‘subject in process’ is an operation where identifications of gender, race, age and class fragment and regulate the person, and their understandings of how they are in the world. This occurs in a continuous distinction between the ‘I’ and ‘not-I’, where subjectivity, and the language that produces it, are situated within a process in which meaning is never completely present but is continually deferred (p.146).

Hélène Cixous also authorises feminist discourse that concerns the phallogentrism of Western metaphysics and addresses how women are culturally situated by the modern drive of capitalist and psychoanalytic masculinity, authority and power. She deconstructs traditional conceptions of language and sexual difference through advocating the potential of *écriture féminine* (a discourse she describes as emanating from pre-Oedipal drives of the body). As Cixous (1981) points out, deconstruction only functions from within a text.

If woman has always functioned ‘within’ the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or shifts its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this ‘within’, to

explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her mouth, biting that tongue with her own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of (Cixous 1981: 257).

To unpick principles of duality of gender and value, Cixous questions labels and categories of thought, “the naming un-naming that is at work...to deconstruct our dead language habits” (1998: 211). This means scrutinising the unacknowledged ground of the opposition between identity (sameness) and difference and looking at the feminine and/or androgynous, forms of subjectivity as the unincorporated residue opposing and exceeding the power of binary organisation. She contends that masculine hegemony within western culture has relegated the female to the negative underside where she has no way of gaining awareness of the pleasures of her body. She becomes the “repressed” that enables the functioning of this very hegemony (1975: 67).

Understanding the psychocultural processes underpinning New Zealand women’s lives through narratives on nostalgia has also meant looking into how Butler utilises poststructuralism to explicate gender identity. Butler works intensively within the field of gender and her insights regarding normative identification processes whereby the girl is “brought into” language and culture through the interpellation of gender are salient to this project (1993: 3). She claims the term “performative act” describes the constitutive or productive power of discourse. A performative act works by drawing upon and reiterating a set of linguistic conventions, which have traditionally bound certain kinds of effects within an historical convention (p. 163). Rather than being intentional on the part of an individual, this “act” draws down and recites a set of linguistic conventions that have traditionally bound certain kinds of historically sedimented effects (p.134).<sup>5</sup> Butler’s

claim that there is only a reiterated, persistent, and vicissitudinous acting that generates and is generated by power plays a part in my analysis of the women's narratives.

### **(b) Postcolonial Methodology**

I think agency is an effect of working with each other and not something prior...I think we make agency, both personal and joint agency, in learning how to connect with each other. Agency is a material effect of our practices of working...it's an achievement; it's not something you have in advance...agencies are about the potency to make something of the world (Haraway 1995: 63-4)

It is important to acknowledge that authoritative historical accounts of nostalgia that overwhelmed discourses of history, poetry, education and religion of schoolgirls in this country throughout the 1950s and 1960s were all generated by Eurocentric and colonising sources. My critical analysis of these texts undertakes readings that critique their, and my, Eurocentric assumptions and biases. This standpoint has been important in order to undertake research concerning women in Aotearoa/New Zealand, six of whom are Maori, when I am concerned that the voices of the participants are foregrounded in a manner that is culturally appropriate to each. Fonow and Cook consider that this reflexivity must be applied to the whole research process (1991: 2). Such a stance is predicated on 'strong objectivity' that means critically appraising the conceptual frameworks comprising my social situation and the ways that this will have impacted upon the research process. Rather than regarding my positioning amongst the discourses of middle-class professionalism and whiteness as being a disadvantage in researching those who may be in different positions in New Zealand society, I ask how my positioning might act as a resource to critique constitutive frameworks in this country. In this way, social location becomes a critical practice and resource. Critical reflexivity is both salient and ongoing in

the development of the next section concerning the cultural framework of Aotearoa/New Zealand today.

The implementation of research involving both Maori and Pakeha in the context of contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand means confronting vital methodological concerns. From a postcolonial perspective, feminist theorists concede that women under colonialism undergo discrimination both as colonial subjects and as women (e.g. Spivak 1985, 1996; Mohanty 1991). The postcolonial argument is that colonial discourse is a system of statements that can be made about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonising powers, and the relationship between these two (Ashcroft et al 1998: 42). Colonialism is understood as generating deep conflict in the consciousness of the colonised because of the disparity between their knowledges and the knowledges of colonisation. Despite contemporary social structures and cultural histories, colonial discourse specifically hinges on and reiterates European imperialist notions of race.

These concerns reflect those associated with the ideologies scaffolding Maori and Pakeha responses to bi-cultural, multicultural and cross-cultural connections in general, and more specifically concern by Maori people about research into their lives by non-Maori. According to Russell Bishop, (1996) such concerns have examined the traditional undervaluing, belittling and misrepresentation of Maori knowledge, learning practices and processes in research by Pakeha researchers. In Bishop's view, non-Maori research has perpetuated and substantiated neo-colonial paradigms.

These concerns are important for researcher-academics globally who are attempting to rework decades of social science research that has produced positivist, ethnocentric interpretations of 'other' cultures. The traditional dualism of the subject-

object, determined by positivist and masculinist logic, was founded on a distancing of the all-knowing subject from the object being studied. Feminist Maori researchers and academics have clearly distanced themselves from this kind of 'science' and have espoused the right for Maori to be researched only by other Maori. As Ngahuia Te Awekotuku says, social scientists are answerable to the social groups and phenomenon being studied (1991: 67). She suggests that the cultural imperialism of past research practices is avoided by making the research itself the outcome of an expressed need by Maori, and that the knowledge gained from the research benefits the community, with value and relevance to the people studied. In this way, the collective interest is maintained (p.67).<sup>6</sup> These comments reflect the specific dilemmas of accreditation, responsibility and accountability when carrying out research amidst a diversity of race, ethnicity, politics and languages where there is a dominant culture.

The fact that I am non-Maori, or *tauiwi*, or a *Pakeha*, means that my educated response was to acknowledge the Maori critique of having their concerns and issues researched by Eurocentric researchers, and to therefore interview only non-Maori women. Firstly, it would be more efficacious to make contact with willing interviewees within the Pakeha community in the (noticeably) mono-cultural city in which I live. This would be expedient too in terms of travel. Over the years I have gradually lost contact with many of the Ngapuhi women with whom I grew up in Kaikohe. In the last ten years I have been in a Pakeha milieu, which has been urban and multicultural rather than bi-cultural. The exploration of my Jewish ancestry, my involvement with a group of friends from many cultures, and my academic work has situated me increasingly globally. In keeping with the position of many Maori academics, I have argued that Maori women

have their own voices; their own constituency and they neither want nor need me to do research 'about' them.

In 1995, I attended a High School Reunion in Northland and made contact with many of the Maori women with whom I had gone to High School. I stayed at the home of N. who is Maori and one of my childhood friends. She is married to a *kaumatua* (respected elder) of a *hapu* or sub-tribe near to where we grew up. For two summers I lived with her and her family them, and also joined with them at the marae and heard their stories. There was some discussion about the significance of nostalgia to Maori. Three of the women expressed interest in my project and said they would talk to others who might be interested as well. I agreed as long as N. and her husband guided and facilitated my interactions with the hapu and the Maori women involved in the research.

In her paper "Developing partnership in research: Pakeha researchers and Maori research", Fiona Cram cites Graham Smith's (1990) "partnership models" as a way of enabling Pakeha to carry out research that is *for* Maori rather than *on* Maori (1997: 62-63). The tiaki model is where the research process is guided and mediated by authoritative Maori people – the word means 'helper'. Throughout the time I spent gathering interviews from the women of their hapu, N. and her husband helped and guided me through generating "culturally intelligible and acceptable frames of reference" (Stewart and Williams, 1992:2 cited in Cram, 1997: 63).

Gayatri Spivak has also been a source of guidance. According to her argument, one develops a certain degree of rage against the history that has produced and produces such an abject script for the white researcher (1996: 52). Rather than asking why, because one's skin colour is white, one cannot speak or be positioned as a researcher amongst



Maori, Spivak's view means that one asks, "what silences me?" (p.52). This position establishes an ethical relation to the Other, a call of relationship that is critical of narcissism and seeks to refigure identities and relations differently; it is a call to honour and embrace near-impossible differences and distances. Such a stance, Spivak argues, is indispensable for any movement toward decolonisation (p.52). Unlearning one's privilege as loss means working critically back through one's own history and privilege and learned responses. Spivak suggests that we think of the ethical relation as an embrace, an act of love where each of us learns from the other rather than speaking for the Other. She points out that once people speak and make themselves heard, the most oppressed and invisible constituencies might cease to exist. I cannot walk in the shoes of any of these women, Maori and Pakeha alike, but I can, in collaboration with them, analyse how so called 'truths' about being 'woman', 'Pakeha' and 'Maori' are produced, by examining processes like nostalgia that naturalise personal experience and desire.

In the context concerning research of both non-Maori and Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand today, my position is that only Maori can speak about, or for, or 'represent' Maori. I contend however that Pakeha women in this country also have an ethical responsibility to utilise the most dynamic epistemologies and methodologies to join forces *with* Maori women in the crucial, collective political struggles for anti-racist, anti-sexist, personal, political and ecological justice in this country. This argument valorises the use of the 'identity' term "Maori women" to achieve important socio-cultural changes and to seek to counter racism. By separating out from white women through identity politics Maori women have gained a vital voice and constituency but this does not

eradicate racism. As Spivak suggests we must always keep in mind the question “[w]ho decolonizes? And how?” (1996: 5).

A neo-Foucauldian approach might claim that authority in this country generates nationalistic labels such as Maori and Pakeha, which themselves force a differential materialisation of bodies. In this view, the construction of race is reiterated and reiterable. As much as identity terms must be used at times to assert affiliations and democratic rights, the terms of identity must be critiqued so that the exclusionary operations of their own production are uncovered (Butler 1993: 226-7). For example, for whom are the terms Pakeha and Maori historically available options? Who is represented by the use of these terms and whom do they exclude? For whom does either term represent an impossible conflict?

### **(c) A Cultural Phenomenology of Embodied Experience**

To introduce this section, it is necessary to relink with points raised in the Preface and the first two chapters. My intent in the Preface is to present my own nostalgia as an intensely meaningful, experienced thing. In Chapter One, I argue for recognition of Baudrillard’s notion of symbolic exchange as immersion in an ambivalent realm where meanings seduce, transform and circulate across all the forms of a particular social milieu. I also emphasise Kristeva’s reading of the Proustian imaginary, where ideas and words structure the embodiment of Proust’s world. To recapitulate Kristeva’s analysis, she claims that Proust reflects embodied memory as constituting “the impenetrable strength of a shock to the senses that immerses the speaking being in Being while encompassing the world in a subjective imaginary” (1996: 194). Hence, metaphor and phrase transmit

the ontology constructing a dialogue between the psyche and the world. Kristeva's evocative claim is that Proust's personal body is "poured directly into his work" (p. 193).

To explore the texts of nostalgia as an "experienced thing" means to consider how the intensity of nostalgic representation eventuates from bodily sensations, which become signs when they are manipulated through linguistic technique. In Chapter Two, I point out that Battaglia provides a window through which to glimpse how the nostalgic experience can be understood as a vehicle of knowledge. The concept of substantive nostalgia upheld by both Battaglia and Strathern, includes this sense of embodied knowledge. Nostalgia is substantive in that it encompasses practical, active knowledges that work performatively. My challenge then, is to find theoretical hypotheses to inform an approach where women's practical, active knowledges of nostalgia might be read as embodied, as being "poured directly" into their relating of these experiences.

To understand women's experiences of nostalgia in this way is not to repeat models of humanist feminist research that valorise women's experience, by taking at face value the notion that words uncritically divulge reality. Neither does the methodology I am engaging with fully embrace other poststructural feminist methodology where experience is understood as constructed through language, and where the analyst concentrates solely on discourse. The methodology undertaken here to analyse the research participant's narratives primarily focuses on a post-phenomenological approach, and thereby reflects current debates explore where the limitations of discourse analysis lie with respect to understanding the embodied, experiential, or corporeal dimensions of knowledge and reality.

Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter traverses methodology that has been informed by post-phenomenological accounts of embodied experience. This follows Linda Martin Alcoff (2000), who argues that it is vital for feminists to pursue ideological critique through a phenomenological methodology.

That is, how to make possible critique of the ideological content of corporeal experience within an overall theory that bases knowledge on that experience (Alcoff 2000: 39).

Alcoff claims that by explaining experience and subjectivity only in terms of discourse, feminism has ignored the cognitive significance of experience. According to Alcoff, experience and discourse are understood as imperfectly and disjunctively aligned in a phenomenological reading. She turns to Merleau-Ponty's development of Husserlian phenomenology to follow her argument that Merleau-Ponty's work does not think in terms of the mind/body dualism, one of the key formulations predicated upon oppositional logic. In Alcoff's account, phenomenology primarily concerns "a reflective description of lived human experience...open-ended, plural, fragmented, and shifting...because of the nature of embodied, temporal existence" (Alcoff 2000: 49). Phenomenological interpretation is not outside culture and history but finds meaning "in the interworld of history" (p.49). Or, as Alcoff explains, experience is understood as always generated within a material context, which exceeds the realm of discourse or language. This means that the world "is the background from which all acts stand out...the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions" (p.49).

In Alcoff's theorising, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology proposes an ontology offering feminist theory

the beginning of an expanded conception of reason and knowledge, one which is not predicated upon the exclusion of the feminine, the concrete, or the particular, and which will not require women to become man-like before they can participate in the sphere of philosophical thought.... Such a transformation in our conception of knowledge must attribute a cognitive value to experience; not just that through experience knowledge is communicated, but that experience produces knowledge (Alcoff 2000: 51).

She argues that prioritising experience creates the opportunity to provide depth and sophistication to how feminists might understand and apply experience to conditions of political activism. For me, it is important to understand how and why nostalgic experiences are cognitively constituted; indeed it is only by doing so that phenomenological accounts of the embodied effects of nostalgic practices can be made intelligible. Alcoff suggests women's narratives be scrutinised for their capacity to impart critically important meanings specifically concerning one's body, one's self, and the limits and possibilities of one's relationships with others (p.55). Thus embodiment is understood to concern both experience and subjectivity as functions of interpreting action in different modes, expressions and idioms.

Alcoff's theories are augmented by the distinction between the body and embodiment made by anthropologist Thomas J. Csordas (1999). For Csordas, the *body* is understood as a material, biological entity, while *embodiment* is an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and by the mode of presence and engagement in the world. The core of his theory of self, grounded in embodiment, concerns both Merleau-Ponty's concept of "preobjectivity" and Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitas*.

That part of practices which remains obscure in the eyes of their own producers is the aspect by which they are objectively adjusted to other practices and to the structures of which the principle of their production is itself a product (Bourdieu 1977: 79).

Csordas reads embodiment as a synthesis of culture and experience, where at the core of western culture (as feminists well know) is bodily being, a body that is cultural and historical as well as biological and material (1999: 144). He distinguishes a methodological approach that suggests that the human being is understood as a cultural category because of how people inhabit their bodies, and (analogous to Battaglia and Strathern) the body “is experienced as activity and production” (p.145). Csordas sees “the body, then, as a biological, material entity and embodiment as an indeterminate field defined by perceptual experience and by mode of presence and engagement with the world” (p.145).

This introduces the notion of experience, which, in poststructural terms, is only intelligible within the constraints of language, discourse or representation. Csordas instead argues for Heidegger’s saying that language can disclose experience by suggesting that experience or “embodied immediacy” could be a dialogical partner to discourse with an outcome that posits reality as text (p.146). Citing Merleau-Ponty, Csordas claims that perception is basically a bodily experience, where embodiment is a condition for the objectification of reality. Hence, culture is reflected in objects and representations as well as “the bodily processes of perception by which those representations come into being” (p.147). In the tradition where “semiotics gives us textuality in order to understand representation, phenomenology gives us embodiment in order to understand being-in-the-world...that is something that constitutes experience or that discloses experience” (p.147).

In the work of Foucault, there is what Terence Turner (1994) calls “the body”: “an abstract, singular, intrinsically self-existing and socially unconnected, individual; the

social behaviour, personal identity and cultural meaning of [which] is passively determined by (disembodied) authoritative discourses of power” (Turner 1994: 46). In my view, post, or critical phenomenological methodology contributes directly to feminist concerns about “new ways of thinking about the body” (Grosz 1994: 10), and offers a fresh alternative to, and/or extension of, Foucauldian, or solidly textual poststructural approaches. A cultural phenomenology of embodied experience can offer a feminist challenge to authoritative Foucauldian discourse by positing “the body”, in Csordas’ words, as “processes of self-productive activity, at once subjective and objective, meaningful and material, personal and social, an agent that produces discourses as well as receiving them” (p.46).<sup>7</sup>

To explicate this approach, Csordas (1994), draws upon Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) notion that the body is “a setting in relation to the world”, while consciousness is the body projecting itself into the world (p.7). Csordas tells us that Merleau-Ponty “wants our starting point to be the experience of perceiving in all its richness and indeterminacy, because in fact we do not have any phenomenologically real objects prior to perception” (p.7).

Since the subject-object distinction is a product of analysis, and since objects themselves are end results of perceptions rather than being given empirically to perception, we need a concept to allow us to study the embodied process of perceiving from beginning to end (instead of in reverse as would the empiricists). For this purpose Merleau-Ponty offers the “preobjective” or “prereflective.” (Csordas 1996: 8).

Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is in the world from the beginning:

Consciousness projects itself into a physical world and has a body, as it projects itself into a cultural world and has habits: because it cannot be consciousness without playing upon significances given either in the absolute past of nature or in its own personal past, and because any form of lived experience tends toward a certain generality whether that of habits or that of our bodily functions. It is false to place ourselves in society as an object among other objects, as

it is to place society within ourselves as an object of thought, and in both cases the mistake lies in treating the social as an object. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 137, 364).

Merleau-Ponty's analysis collapses the subject-object duality so that one might ask how the reflective processes of the intellect generate particular spheres of culture. In the lived world of perceptual phenomena our bodies are not objects but are an integral part of perceiving subjects. This is methodologically significant because it points to the fact that it is not legitimate to distinguish mind and body on the level of perception. Rather, by starting with perceptual reality one can ask how reflection objectifies bodies. I find this approach coalesces well with Kristeva's (1996) insights regarding Merleau-Ponty's engagement with Proust. Here, Merleau-Ponty describes what Kristeva calls "a living phenomenology" (p.270). This includes the concept of the intimate interrogation that takes place between the living feeling body and itself (p.270). According to Kristeva: "Sensation, which is a component of a complex field, is already imbued with signification, and it enters into the relationship between subject and object and between feeler and what is being felt" (p.270).

Kristeva's account provides a summary of the post-phenomenological methodology utilised to address the key dimensions motivating this research. Her focus upon "a living phenomenology" (1996: 270), and "sensation" (p. 270), challenges the homogeneous terms, practices and histories of contemporary totalising systems. The post-phenomenological also challenges the traditional supremacy of the authorial (and researcher's) voice, and notions of identity, subjectivity and intersubjectivity, by methodologically prioritising embodied sensations. In conclusion, "living phenomenology" forms the methodological ground from which I pursue the key dimensions of this inquiry into contemporary women's nostalgia.



The next chapter commences Part Two concerning the analysis of Ancient and other historical texts. Although the word *nostalgia* was not yet invented, the yearning for another place in these mythological and theological texts is a recognisable cultural formulation.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook define methodology as the study of actual techniques and practices used in the research process (1991: 1). This definition does not go far enough however and needs to be augmented by understanding the facet of “methodology” that is about the theory of method. That means the theoretical presuppositions that inform how a researcher approaches her work, and in particular the politics of knowledges and attendant epistemologies and ontologies.

<sup>2</sup> Emile Benevise also stressed that it is personal pronouns that create a subject-position in language and culture, and that subjectivity itself “is only the emergence in the being of a fundamental property of language” (Benevise 1971: 224). Saussure conjectured that “without thought language is a vague and uncharted nebula” (1959: 111). He pointed out that meaning is structured as a relation of “radically arbitrary” difference between elements, where a word (signifier) has its meaning not because of what it refers to (the signified), but because it does not mean the same as other words (Saussure 1959: 103). See also Grace (2000).

<sup>3</sup> In critical cultural theory, this subject connotes a form of Cartesian humanism consisting of self-centered epistemology, a subject-constituted history and the privileging of rationality.

<sup>4</sup> Where linguistic procedures become the form whereby the self is constituted, theorists abandon or deconstruct ‘the subject’ by appeals to the discursive procedures of self-reflexive consciousness. For example, in Foucauldian thought, it is ‘power’ that produces and controls, or ‘subjects’ the subject, within systems of knowledge. Various discourses compete for control, but it is the dominant discourse that produces a historically specific regulated subjectivity. This perspective enables a critique of the contemporary system of what Foucault calls ‘bio-power’: a modern political procedure whereby power is exercised through the production and regulation of (human) life by means of expert techniques that generate an alliance between specialised knowledge and institutionalised power (1978: 139-45).

<sup>5</sup> Butler cites Derrida’s words:  
 could a performative utterance succeed if its formation did not repeat a code or iterable utterance...if the formula I pronounce to open a meeting ...were not identifiable as conforming within an iterable model, if it were not identifiable in some way as a ‘citation’? (Butler 1995: 134).

<sup>6</sup> In the same text, Te Awakotuku sets out principles of ethical conduct for researchers in the Maori community:

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“A researcher’s responsibility, when working with people, is to the people themselves. This responsibility transcends sponsors; these individuals must come first. The rights, interests and sensitivities of the people studied must be acknowledged and protected. Wherever possible, consent of the people studied should be sought and confirmed before the project begins.

The aims of the investigation should be conveyed as clearly as possible to the people studied, as should the anticipated outcome of such an investigation.

The people studied have an absolute right to know what will become of the information they have volunteered, and its possible use and application.

The people studied have an absolute right to exercise control over the information they have volunteered; the right to control it, restrict access to it, or withdraw from the actual project findings.

Informants studied have a right to remain anonymous.

Researchers must not exploit informants, or the information volunteered, for personal gain or aggrandisement” (Te Awekotuku 1991: 69).

<sup>7</sup> Csordas claims that Merleau-Ponty believed that embodiment could provide an existential analysis of culture and history. In Csordas’ view, this methodology both challenges and transforms global modes of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. It is a significant in terms of self-reflexivity because “pre-reflective gut feelings and sensory engagement are raised to the level of methodological self-consciousness by insertion of a phenomenological sense of embodiment” (p.150).

## PART TWO: HISTORICAL LITERATURES

### CHAPTER FOUR: AUTHORISATION - MYTHOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

This focus upon authorities (rather than ‘power’), upon all the diverse persons, things, devices, associations, modes of thought, types of judgement that seek, claim, acquire or are accorded authority, and upon the diversity of ways in which authority is authorized again seems to me a distinctive feature of this kind of investigation (Rose 1998: 133).

This chapter is the first of three dealing with historical readings that explore how nostalgia has been understood in the western cultural tradition. The literature reviewed and discussed in these three chapters, have been chosen firstly for their insight into the construction of predominant historical nostalgias, and secondly because they have informed historical, theological and pedagogical practice in New Zealand throughout modernity.

In this chapter critical analysis is applied to historical literature from the fields of mythology and theology. Rose’s (1996) neo-Foucauldian approach is strongly used in writing which directs our focus to authorities, rituals and technologies rather than what Foucault calls “power”. This means that the three chapters constituting Part Two question how historically specific nostalgias generate technologies of reading, writing, memory and rhetoric to authorise specific behaviours in the service of particular objectives.

Rose’s approach is augmented by a semiotic reading which questions how one might read historical text by pointing out the structure of binary oppositions that ‘fix’ traditional epistemologies and ontologies of human life. This approach is particularly important in providing a finely-grained reading of Freud’s construction of nostalgia in Chapter Six.

Applying neo-Foucauldian and semiotic theories to the three historically specific Ancient, Enlightenment and modern eras complements my Baudrillardian trajectory. By provoking questions about what the term nostalgia effects in these texts, claims about nostalgic kinds of 'truth' prior to the technological age are unsettled. Accordingly, the underlying premise throughout Part Two is that different ways of talking about nostalgia are ideologically shaped, that they have certain purposes and induce particular actions in keeping with the communities within which they are fomented. Text generating a longing for the past is also, of course, not a random occurrence but represents a history of problematising particular issues of being human in the Ancient and modern world. Equally, such text provides a way to think about social organisation that gives greater authority to some kinds of human being than to others.

Part Two subjects historical texts to readings that strive to pin down how nostalgia, which is read here as a textual longing for the past, was generated amidst specific histories, social rituals, politics and institutions. This present chapter examines the nostalgic trajectory in Ancient literature. The original Greek, Roman and Judaeo-Christian writings are used in translation alongside contemporary texts that provide insight into the older works. In Chapter Five I explore the invention of nostalgia in the Enlightenment, when it was classified according to an epistemological structure of classical pathology.<sup>1</sup> Chapter Six focuses on Freud's authorisation of modern psycho-medical nostalgic discourse.

## Authoritative Ancient Texts

Identificatory thinking accepts the unity of man reduced to his consciousness and so enjoys dissecting human practices into psychological or sociohistorical categories that closer analysis reveals to be recapitulations of the Aristotelian categories and the theological virtues (Kristeva 1996: 259).

Here Kristeva makes the point (ubiquitous in feminist and other modern and postmodern philosophy) that the metaphysical terms structuring ancient Greek texts have been interminably reiterated through the authoritative meta-discourses of Western culture. By “identificatory thinking”, Kristeva alludes to how difference and exclusion regulate the negated community against which a dominant community, and its separate members, perpetually define themselves in polarised opposition. The two terms of opposition induce a logical polarity that is both mutually exclusive and jointly totalising because all of human life is organised according to one or other category. The polarities of Classical Greek thought regulated and polarised opposition to the ‘others’, be they female, non-Greek, slaves or gods. This is the point Levinas makes in his essay “Transcendence and Height” (1962), where he argues that the spirit of Greek philosophy dominates the whole of Western civilisation. He also maintains that Western philosophy champions the basic monism inherent in reducing the plurality of beings to the unity of “the Same”, thus excluding the otherness of any irreducible “Other” (p.11).

In this chapter I consider how the metaphysical blueprints of Ancient discourse textually regulate the particular human practice of yearning that is, for my purposes, called nostalgia? Hofer’s neologism combining *nostos* and *algos* was generated in 1688, but there are tropes that pre-date *nostalgia* as a longing, yearning or ‘sickness for home’. The two authoritative texts discussed here are chosen because of their familiarity to most

New Zealanders, indeed most Westerners. The first two, the Greek “Golden Age”, and the Judeo-Christian “Garden of Eden”, construct a nostalgic object in that they embellish a longed-for and beautiful place that is said to have once existed. Two other texts construct nostalgia from the point of view of the one immersed in nostalgic longing. One is the yearning of the captive Jews in Babylon for Zion. The second is the exiled Ovid’s longing for his home in Rome. These texts not only concern the disjuncture between a glorified place in the past, and the miserable state of the present, but also concern practices of representation, grammar, rhetoric and memory.

Rather than simply constructing a beautiful and idealised place existing in the past, the nostalgic trope is jeopardised by its dependence on a place in the present where the actual ‘paradise’ is formulated. The texts under discussion assert that the past place longed for is accessible in memory and imagination. They therefore can be read as purposefully organising the metaphysical space of social practice, a space regulating a socio-cultural present in relation to a past ‘paradise’ that is out of reach.

According to Ernst Curtius (1953) writing on the history of ideas transmitted from the Ancient into the medieval world, the ancient pedagogical techniques of grammar and rhetoric were based upon aids to memory: “upon memory rests the individual’s consciousness, of his identity, above all change” (p.395). By this it is understood that the past is substantiated by memory, which preserves and values things in comparison or the chimera of the present - everyday life. Curtius claims that the “European mind” preserves its identity over millennia through the literary tradition dependent upon memory. He cites Vyacheslav Ivanov’s argument that culture itself is no more than memory of “ancestral initiations”:

Memory is a dynamic principle; forgetting is weariness and interruption of movement, descent and return to the condition of relative inertness (Curtius 1953: 395).

For Curtius, the critical point about memory is that it “needs forms in order to crystallise. But crystalline is incorruptible. Mind-pervaded form, on the contrary, can become empty, an untenanted room” (p. 395). Through ‘the materiality of concepts’ such as those provided by “storehouses of trains of thought” (p.70), memory puts tenants in the rooms of the mind. Curtius is referring to the Greek practice of constructing *topoi*, or topics of rhetoric that allow the ideas for oratory and writing to be formulated. *Topoi* not only determine literary topics in general, but they lead the reader to the topic and encourage one’s entry into text, while also generating other *topoi* like “modesty”, “exordium (I bring things never said before)” and “conclusion” (p.82). Techniques generating *topoi* are included in the pantheon of Ancient techniques of memory which, Frances Yates says, were highly regarded and practiced.

Writing in 1966 in *The Art of Memory* Yates explains that literature concerning the practice of memory describes “inner techniques”, “seeing the places, seeing the images stored on the places”, and says that this is dependent upon “visual impressions of the most incredible intensity” (p. 4).

It has been sagaciously discerned by Simonades or else discovered by some other person, that the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things that have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and that consequently perceptions received by the ears or by reflection can be most easily retained if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes (cited in Yates 1966: 4).

Visual images thus become the forms of whatever one wants to place into memory. She cites a text that she claims is possibly the only treatise preserved on the Greek art of memory, Cicero’s, *De oratore*, (11, and lxxxvii, Yates p.352). We can discern that the

function of the senses is privileged over that of the mind; “mind”, and by extension memory, is reliant upon visual imagery.<sup>2</sup>

We are told more specifically how Quintillion, a leading teacher of rhetoric in the first century A.D. authorised discussion of “the achievement of Simonades” meaning ‘rules of places’ that include directions about the rules about returning to a specific place or house in a structure of visual mnemonics.

The achievement of Simonades appears to have given rise to the observation that it is an assistance to the memory if places are stamped upon the mind, which anyone can believe from experience.... Places are chosen and marked with the utmost possible variety, as a spacious house divided into a number of rooms. Everything of note therein is diligently imprinted on the mind.... We require therefore places, either real or imaginary, and images or simulacra which must be invented (cited in Yates 1966: 22-23).

The binary categories designating the real and imaginary are clearly differentiated in this text. There is a sense too that “images or simulacra, which must be invented” are aids that follow on from real or imagined places as devices and techniques that imprint memory. By isolating some of the techniques of this art of memory, one has a sense of how these texts reiterate authoritative practices valuing the sense of perception (sight) over the other senses, memory over forgetfulness and ‘structured’ memory over ‘natural’ memory.

More recently, the political theorist Vincent Geoghegan (1997) writes of Plato’s valorising of memory and cites Socrates’ speech about Memory “as the mother of the Muses” (Geoghegan 1997: 16). In accord with Plato’s epistemological theory of timeless universal form, ‘remembering’ is the royal road to the pre-existing essences of all things, and so renders history circular and backward looking. As Geoghegan says, Plato believed that “seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection” (Geoghegan 1997: 16).



## Poetical Topoi: The Golden Age

Some of these Ancient texts rely upon practices of topoi and memory to generate what is called 'The Golden Age'. In the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary 'The Golden Age' is "[t]he first and best age of the world, in which, according to the Greek and Roman poets, mankind lived in a state of perpetual prosperity, happiness, free from trouble or crime" (p.810). Much Ancient literature speaks of these "ideal geneses" (Foucault 1994: 333), the backward gaze to an idealised mythical time and space that became the hallmark for consequent Golden Ages.

Curtius (1953) describes how the topos of history, including classical and human ideals from late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance, utilised panegyric topics of an ideal man in the ideal landscape of poetry and prose. The topoi themselves included the heroic emotion of tragedy, the beauty of nature, ideal landscapes, and the dreamlands and dream ages of love, friendship and transience: Elysium, Earthly Paradise and Golden Age. (p.82).

Curtius argues that literary conventions governing descriptions of nature prompted rules for describing landscape under categories of judicial oratory (where they supply proof of where and when things happened) and, in a separate category, of eulogy (where places are praised for their beauty, fertility and healthfulness) (p.194). For example, in the fourth book of the *Odyssey*, Homer wrings prophecies of change from the god Proteus by promising him paradise. This 'Elysium', the first mention of earthly paradise in the texts discussed here, is where access is gained by favour of the gods, the weather is mild and life is effortless:

You will not meet your fate and die in Argos where the horses graze. Instead, the immortals will send you to the Elysian plain where living is made easier for mankind, where no snow falls, no strong winds blow and there is never any rain, but day after day the West Wind's tuneful breeze comes from the Ocean to refresh its folk (Homer cited in Hughes 1968: 48).

Homer's text first establishes binary oppositions concerning how death in Argos is less desirable than living on the Elysian plain. It then constructs a 'motivational impulse' towards the positive polarity in that "the Elysian plain" constitutes seductive sensual and auditory imagery.

Similar textual structures and techniques mark Hesiod's Golden Age (800 BC). Robert Hughes (1968) points out that this age evokes a form of noble simplicity under the benign influence of Kronos, the youngest son of Heaven and the father of Zeus, Hades and Poseidon. Chief amongst the writings authorising the Greek metaphor of the Golden Age, Hesiod talks about the joys of the age of Kronos where abundance, peace and simplicity of living characterised human existence. This is contrasted to unfavourable conditions such as labour, pain and old age. In the following text from Hesiod the Golden Age is binarily categorised according to then/now, them/us, and well-being/suffering.

In those days, men lived like gods, free of care, knowing neither labour nor pain. Old age and its miseries never visited them, and retaining the strength of their hands and limbs as long as they lived, they feasted in delight, shielded from all harm...Every good was theirs; the fertile land afforded plentiful nourishment of itself, and men ate and drank at their pleasure (cited in Hughes 1978: 115).

To denote anteriority the text uses the past tense and the phrases; *in those days, as long as they lived*. Further non-specific references reflect how people were protected from *all harm, every good was theirs*, and there was *plentiful nourishment*. In addition *Old age* is personified to strengthen both how ineffectual it is and how supernatural are the forces ranged against the body.

The Roman poets Horace, Virgil and Ovid also represent the Golden Age with topoi of time and place. Whereas Homer's landscapes generate motifs that mark specific scenes such as "heart's desire, perpetual spring, blessed life, trees, spring, grass and flowers" (Hughes 1978: 185), Ovid's poetry is dominated by rhetorical descriptions of nature reduced to types and schematised, with the "surging wealth of sensual perceptions... being ordered by conceptual and formal means" (Hughes 1978: 195-6).

For H.S. Versnel (1994) the original Golden Age found in Kronos' kingdom was a realm of peace, justice and prosperity designated by the Athenians' *Saturnia regna*, denoting "life at the time of Kronos, and the Golden Age at the beginning of time, now irrevocably in the past" (1994: 125). Versnel suggests that this marks the beginning of a rich tradition of utopianism and 'wishing time' with which Kronos is closely associated. Versnel describes Plato's writing in the fourth century B.C.E. as being in dialogue with this spirit.

Versnel argues however that The Golden Age of Kronos is replete with ambiguity. He describes how Kronos is the god of an inhumanely cruel era without ethical standards, but he is also a great king *par excellence* of a Golden Age of abundance, happiness and justice (p. 126). Versnel suggests that these ancient oppositions signify the primordial chaos preceding human civilisation, as well as the attributes of natural abundance which eliminate both social tensions and suppressions while sometimes eliminating the existing hierarchy (p. 132). Versnel reads the marked ambivalence of the Golden Age as explicating the instability of harmony, freedom and abundance because these carry the seeds of "real social anomie and anarchy" (p. 141).

## The Garden of Eden

In later literature emanating from Judaeo-Christian authority there is nevertheless continuity because, as Curtius describes, the Christian literati clung to pagan rhetorical practices, for example continuing to use the topos of “consolatory oration” while replacing the heroes and poets who had to die with the patriarchs (1953 78).

The story of the Garden of Eden opens the text that informs both Judaism and Christianity, in the Hebrew Bible. The term *Eden* means “‘pleasure, delight’... [t]he first abode of Adam and Eve, Paradise” (S.O.E.D.: 584). It is a Paradise of food, life and plenty, existing at the very beginning of human time. Utilising dense visual, spiritual and sensual imagery, the writer of the following Adamic text brings into play the binaries of life/death, the Lord God/human being, good/evil. The human body is evoked by the terms *the breath of life, his nostrils, a living creature, the eye, food and knowledge*. This body is situated amidst nature: *the dust of the ground, trees, garden, river, gold, gum resin, and cornelians*. Representation of nature generates the seductive qualitative terms, *pleasing, good, life, and flowing*. The term *good* is repeated three times. Direct dialogue stresses the authority of God’s decree that the Man resists *the knowledge of good and evil*.

The Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living creature...The Lord God made trees to grow up from the ground, every kind of tree pleasing to the eye and good for food; and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There was a river flowing from Eden to water the garden...The gold of that land is good; gum resin and cornelians are also to be found there...The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and look after it. ‘You may eat from any tree in the garden’, he told the man, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; the day you eat from that, you are surely doomed to die.’ (The Revised English Bible: Genesis 2: 8-18).

In Christian ontology, this text generates the binary of before/after with a prelapsarian Christian paradise, the Garden of Eden to be gazed back upon after the Fall, after Adam

and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and were expelled by God. The Paradise that was lost can of course be found again in the Christian Heaven. As Hughes claims: "Paradise epitomises our dream of order: natural organisation, with no aggression, no frictions, no tensions...the reward of virtue, the concrete evidence of it" (p.48). Both the classical Golden Ages and the forward-looking basis of utopian Judaic messianism are juxtaposed to Christianity. In addition, it might be claimed that the Garden of Eden, like the Golden Age, was an early originary and pristine image, or a 'home' accessed in nostalgic thought, as a particular type of utopic belief.<sup>3</sup>

Cixous (1998) stresses the contradictory nature of the Garden of Eden story by claiming that Paradise is the very place where a sequence of authoritarian texts begins. In her argument, the Garden of Eden text generates theological and phallogentric law by laying the framework for commands from a male God to his male creation which have been proliferated throughout mythology and literature.

Cixous reflects the constructed nature of this text by deconstructing the binaries upon which it depends, including man/woman, life/death, mind/body, visible/invisible, and presence/absence. She points out the two dominant narrative elements: firstly, there is the word of the law or the discourse of God and the Apple, and secondly, the struggle between the Apple and the discourse of God, occurring in the short excerpt above, prior to the advent of a woman. According to Cixous, the Book begins at this point Before the Apple, which is said not to be a not-to-be-eaten-fruit, but the Law. She unfolds the absurdity of the authoritative theological mystery where God says that if the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is tasted *you will die*. This is absolutely incomprehensible, Cixous argues: "What rich terrain for the theologians and the philosophers, since for Eve 'you

will die' does not mean anything, since she is in a paradisiac site where there is no death" (p.133).

Not only do knowledge and taste go together in the theological text but; what is at stake here is the mystery which is assailed by the law, the law which is absolute, verbal, invisible, negative, it is a symbolic coup de force and its force is its invisibility, its non-existence, its force of denial, its "not"....It is the struggle between presence and absence, between an undeniable, unverifiable presence and absence: the apple is visible and it can be held up to the mouth, it is full, it has an inside....This story tells us that the genesis of woman goes through the mouth, through a certain oral pleasure, and through a non-fear of the inside....Of course she is punished because she has access to pleasure, of course a positive relationship to the inside is something which threatens society and must be controlled (Cixous 1998: 133-4).

From this poststructural feminist perspective, the Adamic excerpt is read as concerning how the loss of the maternal body transposed into imagery generating God-the-father. The characteristics of the Edenic text in the context of Judeo-Christian discourse induce a memorable and uncorrupted paradise, 'back there', until and where woman corrupted Man so that paradise is forever lost. Butler (1993: 37) draws upon Irigaray to argue that "woman" in the Judeo-Christian tradition carries the burden of materiality disavowed by the male subject: "Man's self-affect depends on the woman who has given him being and birth" (1993: 60). Rather than recognise his female 'other', Man posits a male God as his other.

The Biblical paradise generates an absent, compellingly beautiful place of plenty and well being, like the Golden Age. In the competing discourses of past and present worlds, the awareness and longing for a space 'back then' is articulated poetically and lent credence by being positioned against a space 'here and now' that is different. This reminds us that the present is always the platform from which one sees the past. The theological twist in consequent verses is that the loss of Eden constitutes both '*man's*' disobedience and the pain and tragedy of this loss.

To explore the rhetorical technique generating the biblical account, I draw upon Paul Ricoeur (1967) who emphasises that the story gets its meaning from the effect of distancing past and present worlds. He describes how the text has to integrate the terrible ordeal of the destruction of the Jewish nation and subsequent exile: “Intelligence, work and sexuality then, would be the flowers of evil” (p. 246). By adjacently situating the innocence of the Garden of Eden and the malediction of the fall, the Jewish writers produced transhistorical unity through this Adamic myth. In Ricoeur’s account, the Adamic text attains depth by putting into succession that which is both contemporaneous and unable to be contemporaneous: “it makes an ‘earlier’ state of innocence terminate in an instant that begins the ‘later’ state of accursedness” (p.251).

## **Exile**

### **(a) Babylonian Captivity**

The story (historical in origin) of the Babylonian Captivity is another authoritative nostalgic text of the Judeo-Christian tradition. “By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion...For they that led us away captive required of us then a song...How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” (Psalms 137: 1-6).

The text generates the spatial ‘past’ sense of having been beside water, weeping at specific memories. We know this is a tragedy because of the words *wept*, *led us away in captivity*, and *strange land*. There is then an immersion in the present and future with the interrogative, “*How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?*” This has the effect

of stressing the disjuncture involved when carrying out the practices of Judaism outside of the 'home' territory of the Lord himself.

The narrative frame is simple and iterates the following terms as valorised binaries: we/they, Israelites/Babylonians, freedom/captivity, familiar/unfamiliar, home/away. Unlike the previous texts which list characteristics of the longed for seductive and beautiful place, this one echoes only with the tragedy of the longing to return 'home', where one can conduct worship to the God of one's Fathers, the God of Israel. The metonymous object of this nostalgia is designated by one word, *Zion*. According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Zion designates "[o]ne of the hills of Jerusalem, on which the city of David was built, and which became the centre of Jewish life and worship; hence, the house of God, Israel, the Jewish religion...." S.O.E.D. 1933: 2472). The text of Babylonian Captivity is similar to the Golden Age and Adamic text in that it constitutes the metaphysical binaries; then/now and past/present. In this text and in the following however, memory engenders the poignancy of despair.

### **(b) Ovid's Exile**

This section draws upon A.L. Wheeler's (1959) translation in *Ovid with an English Translation: Tristia. Ex Ponto*. Ovid's *The Tristia* written C.E. 8-12 establishes 'home' as the longed-for object, but here it is from the perspective of Ovid's thirty years of exile from his home in Tomis. Here the writer is also amongst strangers in a foreign land where they speak a foreign language, but unlike the Golden Age stories, or that of the Babylonian exile, Ovid's text draws specific contrasts between this home with its attendant relationships and his present state of being amongst the inhabitants of the place



that is not-home. Moreover, rather than reading this as a text about the writer's present suffering only, it can be read as a text by one who is exiled by his own world and yet has the skill, time and opportunity to contemplate his position within the Roman world that exiled him. Ovid's topos of yearning for home while in exile, is drawn from the literary structure regulating the lives of those he hopes to be reunited with, his wife and home and the citizenry of Rome itself:

Before my eyes flit my home, the city, the outline of places, the events too that happened in each place. Before my eyes is the image of my wife as though she were present. She makes my woes heavier, she makes them lighter – heavier by her absence, lighter by her gift of love and her steadfast bearing of the burden laid upon her (III iv 57-62, cited in Wheeler 1959: 119).

The repeated *before my eyes*, reflects the memory arts and the prestige of visual memory. In this way the text appeals to both the presence and the absence of *my wife*, fluctuating between the binary terms of value; *heavier/lighter*. Here too memory, or the "mind", generates the selection of specific topoi to reiterate other suffering (*woes*) experienced in exile.

The poem subsequently structures an opposition between the *imagination* recalling Rome and the *real sight* of Rome itself. The textual use of images appearing *before my eyes* lends credulity to the text by appealing to the *mind*, *the mind's eye* and ears *far away*. It also constructs the poignancy of the writer's position through a plethora of polarities including *freedom/exile*, *throng/me*, and *near/far away*, *native land/the opposite side of the world*.

All this [Augustus Caesar's triumphant reentry into Rome] I, an exile, shall see in my mind's eye – my only way; for my mind at least has a right to that place which is torn from me. It travels free through measureless lands, it reaches heaven in its swift course, it leads my eyes to the city's midst, not allowing them to be deprived of so great a blessing; and my mind will find a place to view the ivory car [Caesar's] – thus at least for a brief space shall I be in my native land. Yet the real sight will belong to the happy people, the throng will rejoice in the presence of their own leader. But as for me – in imagination only and with ears far away I shall have perforce to realize the joy, and there will scarce

be one sent far from Latium to the opposite side of the world to tell it all to eager me (Wheeler 1959: 171).

Although an exile, Ovid's *mind* is free, has rights and can *travel free* anywhere including *measureless lands* and the *city* evoked in terms of disembodiment - *torn from me*. It is significant that Ovid's form of exile was that of *relegatio*, meaning that he kept his property and civic rights in Rome, rather than the more severe *exilium* (Howatson and Chilvers 1993: 388). Hence, despite the tragic separation from home and wife, Ovid's Roman identity unites the subject with his home.<sup>4</sup>

## Discussion

This chapter considers the ancient transmission techniques of topoi and memory especially in texts reiterating the metaphysical structures of Ancient communities. Two things about these excerpts are immediately notable. First, the texts construct a sense of anteriority and a unidirectional reading about a place that existed in the past. Secondly, this past place is cast in a compelling imaginative form. Golden Age texts construct seductive and compelling past 'places' to be longed for. In the Adamic myth, the past is also a Paradise and triumph of positiveness, plenty and well-being. The story of Jewish enslavement in Babylon implies the significance of Zion by the intensity of the yearning for that place, rather than by listing its attributes, which has the effect of compelling our focus directly upon the dominant signifier *Zion* – the place of the *Lord's song* and metonymically God, Israel and the Jewish religion. In Ovid's text, images of *my wife*, *Caesar* and *happy people* constitute the compelling home.

Together with this 'past paradise' there are key words and phrases generating the misery of living in the present where one is separated from that past. The construction of

paradise is dependent upon, as it is negated by, the writer's present place of memory, woe, deprivation, exile and weeping. It is the very yearning or nostalgia that generates the disparity between the two places; and an ambiguity governed by a third structural area that includes emblems of ritualised spirituality and authoritative injunction: the gods, Lord God, Zion and Caesar Augustus.

By focusing on the beauty of paradise, the texts all achieve the dissonance of the presence of an absence, at the same time as describing this absent place as foreclosed and unachievable. On one hand paradise is a realm of beauty, plenty and the senses, but on the other hand, humankind's relation to these is forever estranged.

The texts create narrations of the truth of a present ordeal of being separated from paradise. But this very state of dereliction is never articulated apart from, or against the authorisation of, those governing bodies, which form its grounds and articulation. In other words, the paradise that is foregrounded even as this authority is presented is united with the present only under the auspices of that very authority.

Reinforcing the difference between 'then' and 'now', the texts represent paradise as either a time pre-existing present society but perhaps aspired to as a future projection (Golden Age and Eden), or as existing in another space which also might be accessible later (Zion, Rome). Indeed, the space of paradise is valorised only as far as it submits to these prior knowledges. Highlighting paradise implies that the nostalgic present is antithetical to the claims made by the paradise text. Although each text seeks to fix the wonder, the very perfection of these paradises guarantees that identification with them is forever suspended. The beautiful paradise both depends on and is challenged by the present.

In this way, the mechanisms of memory and imagination and *topoi* that bring paradise close and then take it away also reiterate patriarchal taxonomies. In all of the texts the one generating the longing is an ungendered Man. The only feminine presence, in her absence, is Ovid's wife who is one of the objects of longing. When the Garden of Eden is first revealed to Adam, the Adamic text has not yet introduced Eve. The ungendered, universalised Man is both textually separated from, and yet united with, the compelling charms of paradise. But rather than recognise Man's female other, the texts instead generate the masculinised figurations of gods, the Lord God's Zion, and Caesar's Rome. As a space both fulfilling and distancing masculine desire, the absent is made present, the lost is found in memory and imagination, and the subject effects a transcendental unity with the signifiers of authority – be they those who direct the Elysian plain, Eden, Zion or Rome. This unity forms an overarching relation regardless of circumstances of time and place.

In this reading we can appreciate Grosz's argument that "the debt that masculinity, children and culture owe to the maternal is substituted by an image of the self-made, self-created man" (1989: 120). Grosz asserts that the notion of God is nothing but a plan to alleviate male consciousness of, and guilt about, this debt: "As man's self-reflecting Other, God usurps women's creativity and their place as the source of the terrestrial [sic]. God (and through Him, man) becomes the creator or mother of the mother" (p.121).

By textually controlling human access to paradise, the texts also presuppose that this past might be transformed into a future projection and become a utopia to be realised if certain requirements are met. In Christian discourse, this motivational force regulates

entry to Paradise in the afterlife. In Judaism the concept of *masheach* designates the concept of a messiah who will – as Dowsick explains – “restore the Jewish people to wholeness and reaffirm the tranquillity and greatness of earlier days” (1995: 46). Foucault characterises one aspect of Western political philosophy as an adherence to this kind of utopian hypothesis, that faces the problem of political order by constructing models of an idealised society through “searching for general principles by which to evaluate existing conditions” (1984: 5). He suggests we should relinquish utopian schemes in his critique of the appearance of neutrality that pervades the machinery of institutions (p.6). Consequently, the utopian past evoked by the nostalgia of someone separated from the Golden Age, Garden of Eden, Zion or Rome, can be read as generated by, and generating, methods of regulation, punishment, supervision and constraint. This is “the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power” (Foucault 1984: 177).

In this light, nostalgic discourse can be read as “a political technology of the body” (p. 177). The past paradise marks an embodied worldliness of plenty, beauty, belonging, native land and wife. In all of these stories, humans are separated from a paradise, or at least a more desirable time and place, which they reiterate in theological and mythological discourse. The absence of this paradise suggests that nostalgia is materially constituted, and indeed what upholds nostalgic memories is the longing for the specific material comforts proffered by Kronos, Eden, Zion or Rome. The crucial point is that nostalgic texts reflect revolts at the level of the body, against the very body existing

in theology, in the Greek or Roman State. At issue is the materiality of the regimes that this nostalgia represents.

The compelling descriptors of paradise, or what has been lost, are strongly disparate from the writer's present condition and the story comes about by differentiating amongst the passive verbs reflecting this distancing: exiled, enslaved, alienated, banished, expelled and so on. If negative forces (Babylonian 'others') excluded the subject from their home or paradise, then the condition narrated is called *enslavement*; if one's own authorities perpetuated the action (Ovid's Rome), it is *exile* or *banishment*. If brought about by the corruption or sin of one's forebears, then the condition is more likely to be recognised by the terms *alienation*, *expulsion* or *displacement*.

The necessity to so strongly assert the positive nature of wondrous paradise gestures towards its very fragility, instability and transience. To so assert the Good past presupposes that an equally constituted Evil present is being deliberately ignored or neutralised. Baudrillard claims, "hyperbolic positivity for its part engenders catastrophe, for it is incapable of distilling crisis and criticism in homeopathic doses" (1990: 106). Baudrillard highlights the underlying inseparability of Good and Evil, arguing that crimes and catastrophes "are ultimately the true signs of freedom and the natural disorder of the world":

Since the Garden of Eden, which Evil's advent closed to us, Evil has been the principle of knowledge. But if indeed we were chased from the Garden for the sin of knowledge we may as well draw the maximum benefit from it. Trying to redeem...the principle of Evil can result only in the establishment of new artificial paradises, those of the consensus, which for their part do embody a true death principle (Baudrillard 1990: 107).

The technologies of nostalgia in the discourses described here can be read as being no more, nor less, than tools authorising a series of governmentalities, including Greek, Roman and Judaeo-Christian educators, philosophers and authorities. It is therefore

healthy to be sceptical of an idealised past place, a paradise constructed by the language of the authorities. In Ancient texts, the beauty of paradise assigned to the past is more specifically a claim made within the category of masculine topoi and memories of Good and Evil which serve “identificatory thinking” (Kristeva 1996: 259) in the interests of Greek, Jewish, Christian and Roman patriarchies. Ancient narratives of a beautiful paradise valorise a material reality that is out of reach of the tragic present. They also generate the possibility of paradise in the present, by imaginatively inducing its accessibility in memory. What I might call ‘the trope of nostalgia’ discursively repeats these figurations as if they were logical and historically true, all the while concealing that they are mechanisms of the hegemonic orders of law and knowledge, the authorities to which they are inevitably bound.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'classical' in Chapter Five refers to Foucault's Classical Age, the period designated by Foucault in *The Order of Things* as a specific *episteme* or epistemological field occurring between 1650 and 1800. After this, "we can see that the system of positivities was transformed in a wholesale fashion at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century...the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered" (1994: xxii).

<sup>2</sup> According to Yates, *Ad Herennium* transmitted these ideas of how important perception or visual imagery is for memory to the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Yates says that the Renaissance philosopher Bruno is himself merely reiterating the rules for the art of memory laid down in *Ad Herennium*, with "rules for places, rules for images, memory for things, memory for words" (p. 6). In *Ad Herennium* the 'artificial' memory (as opposed to 'natural' or 'innate'), is likened to an "inner writing", established from the imprint of places, particularly houses, and images.

A locus is a place easily grasped by the memory, such as a house, an intercolumna space, a corner, an arch, or the like. Images are forms, marks or simulacra (*formae, notae, simulacra*) of what we wish to remember (cited in Yates 1966: 6).

<sup>3</sup> Foucault claims that the linkage of the past with a 'home' or 'abode' evokes "intrinsic, autochthonous, or universally recognisable characteristics" (Foucault 1972: 21-22). For Geoghegan (1997), the German word *Heimweh* has the same kinds of meaning: "that evocative word *Heimat*, with its connotations of home, belonging, place of origin kept alive in the memory" (1997: 16).

<sup>4</sup> In a Foucauldian reading, punishments, like the punishment of exile, must be shown not only as "negative" mechanisms that make it possible to repress, prevent, exclude and eliminate but also as societally positive by being connected to "a whole series of positive and useful effects which it is their task to support" (Foucault 1984: 172).



## CHAPTER FIVE: AUTHORISATION – THE NEW CURIOSITY

The dark soft languages are being silenced (Attwood 1996: 2220).

This chapter investigates selected medical, philosophical and sociological discourses that authorise western nostalgia. The first section draws particularly upon Baudrillard, Grace's reading of Baudrillard and Foucault to contextualise the invention and categorisation of nostalgia in medical terminology. I then discuss Stanley Jackson's descriptions of the medicalisation of nostalgia, followed by Jean Starobinski's argument that the historical loss of medical interest in nostalgia is to be associated with "the interiorisation of the village" an internalising theory of maladaptation. Bryan Turner provides a critical sociological perspective from which to read these transformations in nostalgia from a yearning encountered in the beautiful paradises of Ancient text to nostalgia's incarnations as a pathological category and a form of cultural critique.

### **The Invention of Nostalgia**

The invention of the word nostalgia coincides with what Foucault calls the Classical Age (1650-1800).<sup>1</sup> The term began its existence as one manifestation of the "new curiosity" which dominated the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a curiosity which gave scope and precision to the "sciences of life" (Foucault 1994: 125). It coincided with what Foucault describes as the era when knowledge and language became formalised so that and sounds and syllables were organised in a way that was purely representational.

This period formed a break with the knowledges of Antiquity, which consisted of a ternary, or threefold, system of signs and “of the reciprocal cross reference of signs and similitudes” (1994: 33). According to Foucault, the arrangement of signs became binary, connecting a signifier and a signified, and “language itself became a form of representation, ‘of making a sign’ – of simultaneously signifying something and arranging signs around that thing” (p. 43). This marked a transformation where knowledge was formally analysed “in terms of identity, difference, measurement and order” (1994: 52), and, reflects links between an empirically based science and an exact mode of representation. As Foucault suggests, empirical studies could not have existed without the links that the whole episteme of Western culture had with a “universal science of order” (1994: 57).

It was this system that introduced into knowledge probability, analysis and combination, and the justified arbitrariness of the system...it was the sign system that linked all knowledge to a language, and sought to replace all languages with a system of artificial symbols and operations of a logical nature (Foucault 1994: 63)

In this way, the episteme of Western culture generated a positivist and empiricist rationality where we find “representation itself constituted by language” or a sequence of verbal signs (pp. 81-83). Nostalgia is an excellent example of how this Classical theory of language is specifically organised:

One might say that it is the Name that organizes all Classical discourse; to speak or to write is...to make one’s way towards the sovereign act of nomination, to move, through language, towards the place where things and words are conjoined in their common essence, and which makes it possible to give them a name (Foucault 1994: 117).

The invention of nostalgia literally hinges around a “name”. Johannes Hofer invented it in 1688 as the subject of his medical dissertation for the University of Basel, entitled, ‘Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia or Homesickness’ (Jackson 1986: 381). This neologism was created out of two Greek words, *nostos* meaning “return home”

and *algos* meaning “pain”. In the empiricist European account of science and medicine, observable physical characteristics (where vision was the privileged sense), of the painful longing for one’s country or home marked certain sectors of the population as nostalgic. Nostalgia was one thing amidst the “arrangement of things”, when techniques of representation generated comparison, analysis, enumeration and discrimination (1994: 55). It also generated a new way of making history.<sup>2</sup>

From now on there is an interior ‘mechanism’ in languages which determines not only each one’s individuality but also its resemblance to the others: it is this mechanism, the bearer of identity and difference, the sign of adjacency, the mark of kinship, that is now to become the basis for history. By its means, historicity will be able to introduce itself into the density of the spoken word itself (Foucault, 1994: 236).

In Baudrillard’s theorising, the procedures surrounding and structuring the invention of nostalgia, concern what Grace calls “the semiological reduction” of the symbolic by an ideology that “simultaneously structures a mythical economic object and linguistic subject” (2000: 17). She claims that accompanying the shift to capitalist systems, both representation (signifier/signified, designated as Sr and Sd below) and the code of economic value were shaped by a logic of representation and reference. The signifier and economic exchange value (with its logic of the market and of equivalence) were both conceptualised as representing ‘reality’:

The Sr represented the Sd – the concept, or the sign (Sr/Sd) represented the real thing, the referent (in the form of ‘nature’); EV [economic value] was a proxy that relied on UV [use value] as its referent, again a thoroughly naturalised construct; the Sd of production was the subject who laboured. This period was marked by the object-as-commodity, where the materiality of the commodity was obtained through this structural formulation of EV/UV; language referred to things where reality (Sd or referent) preceded its representation (Grace 2000: 19).

It might also be claimed that this reflected a radical restructuring of the relationship between consciousness and its objects.<sup>3</sup> The objective study of history in the late seventeenth century, for example constructed a more profound sense of the difference

and separation between the past and the present. The printing press was a medium well suited to the transmission of ideas of time concerning the historical, as well as more private thoughts and feelings.<sup>4</sup>

In this era of history authority objectified the past, and the historian observed the linear flow of time, while the first novels constituted a narrative linked not only to time schemes and personal identity in time, but also the visualisation of this narrative in an environment or interior space.<sup>5</sup> In eighteenth century England the novel emerged with the use of 'realism' as itself a literary tradition, but giving rise to a form distinguished from the earlier fictions of epic and mythology. Like Greek, Roman and Judaeo-Christian literatures, in the novel 'truth' is dependent on conformity to literary conventions but the novel's modern realism also gave rise to apparent truth to individual experience.

Grace emphasises the importance of recognising how the European human subject emerging through the early modern period was anti-Cartesian. She cites Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1970: 319) to describe a reconfiguration of subjectivity that occurred during the eighteenth century in relation to analysis in economics, biology and language. She argues that the emergence of the embodied subject of modernity constitutes a contradictory body, both as an object of knowledge in clinical anatomy and as "the condition of knowledge, of transcendence (the subject)" (Grace 1997: 90). The anxiety surrounding the "continual, intensely political" relation between the two kinds of analyses that evolved from this construction of the modern subject brought into being two kinds of analysis, of the body and of human knowledge. This highlights what Foucault calls "a strange empirico-transcendental doublet" (Grace 1997: 90). Throughout the following sections of this chapter, I trace how some of the contradictions and irreconcilability

between the physiological and the psychological distinguishes the nostalgic subject of modernity.

The next sections follow this early modern, and modern subject in terms of its nostalgia, which first designates physiological or bodily signs of distress or, to use the term introduced in the previous chapter, revolts at the level of the body, and then gradually loses its medicalised status to become a psychological construct.

### **The Medical Classification of Nostalgia**

The medical historian Stanley Jackson (1984) cites Johannes Hofer's original seventeenth century observations regarding two of Hofer's nostalgic patients. This episode reminds us of the power of the physician who "by one of those abrupt shortcuts that leave aside mere medical competence, became the almost magical perpetrator of the cure, and assumed the aspect of thaumaturge; it was enough that he observed and spoke" (Foucault 1984: 162). In this first excerpt from Jackson we hear how a student who had left his home in Berne to study in Basel became nostalgic.

He developed a fever, anxiety, and palpitations, and his symptoms worsened to where he was thought to be dying and prayers were said for him. The apothecary who attended him realised that he was suffering from homesickness (*Heimweh*) and recommended that he be sent home. As soon as the patient heard this...he felt better...and had recovered by the time he reached Berne (Jackson 1984: 373).

More significant than the "magical" performance of the physician, the word "home" has the power to elicit recovery. Jackson recounts similar narrative about a young peasant girl from Basel who was hospitalised away from her home and became homesick, with worsening symptoms until her parents also took her home. In Jackson's citation from Hofer below, nostalgia effects this figuration as a strict binary separating the 'home' from the 'not-home', or "foreign land".

The persons most susceptible to this disease are young people living in foreign lands.... They are apprehensive and find pleasure only in sweet thoughts of the fatherland until the foreign country becomes repugnant to them, or suffering various inconveniences they think night and day of returning to their native land and when prevented from doing so, they fall ill (Jackson 1984: 374).

The actual nostalgia consists of observable and reported bodily symptoms such as a continuing melancholy, incessant thinking of home, disturbed sleep or insomnia, weakness, loss of appetite, anxiety, cardiac palpitations, stupor and fever. Archived by medical discourse, these symptoms and contributing factors map a dichotomous relationship where the positive attributes of the sweet, pleasant, native “fatherland” are starkly contrasted to the violent, strange, stifling, disagreeable, unjust foreign land.

Preceding dangerous, chronic ailments, where the patient is not treated well or as he wishes, or atmospheric changes which act on the blood and nervous spirits. Even greater [is]...the impact of foreign usages and customs, as well as very different modes of life [and]...injustices and disagreeable situations experienced by the individual. All these instances...recalled to mind the better native land, which had been left behind (Jackson 1984: 374).

These representations of nostalgia reflect the transitory individuals as they move from one country to another and find themselves amongst foreigners. Nostalgia was undoubtedly a serious condition, which, if all other treatment failed, necessitated that the patient was sent home, “for experience shows that this action practically always produces a cure. On the other hand, most of those who cannot return finally die, or are driven mad” (Jackson 1984: 375).

Amidst the movement of peoples, especially associated with the territorial wars marking the first stages of early modern nationalism, nostalgia as a disease was most prevalent amongst soldiers in Western Europe. As Foucault claims in *Discipline and Punish*, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a surge in great state apparatuses like the army, police and fiscal administration. New techniques were

employed to signal a new economy of power 'individualized' throughout the whole social body (Foucault 1984: 61).<sup>6</sup>

Nostalgia was, Jackson suggests particularly strongly linked to Swiss nationals away from their homeland or even their home region (nostalgia was also referred to as *Schweizerkrankheit*) and Swiss medical literature contributed a great deal to the "extensive 'homesickness literature' (*Heimwehliteratur*) of the eighteenth century" (Jackson 1984: 375). Thus Switzerland, with no coastal borders, reinforced the dichotomous terms, at home/homesick, home/away from home, constituting the 'community' and the 'other'. In early modern medical literature, the violent sense of longing for home experienced by the foreigner in such a paradigm reiterates the community and nation's attempts to circumscribe and bound its 'own'.

The increasingly separate relationship between signifier and signified is accompanied by self/other dichotomies denoting 'identity' and 'otherness'. The interior mechanism in language that constitutes these terms instantiates what Baudrillard calls, "the law ...the universal principle of understanding, the regulated interplay of differences, moral, political and economic rationality" (1990: 141). This 'law' replaces the "predestined world of the Other, [where] everything comes from elsewhere – happy or unhappy events, illnesses, even thoughts themselves. All imperatives flow from the non-human – from gods, beasts, spirits, magic" (1990: 141). By rationalising the illness caused by being away from home medical discourse concomitantly removes the element of exchange between people reflected in a prior symbolic dimension where as Baudrillard explains, the problem of Otherness was reduced to a question of hospitality.

The Other is my guest...a foreigner, a stranger, *extraneus*. And for this very reason, his strangeness has to be exorcized. But once he has been initiated in due form, my guest's life becomes even more precious to me than my own. In this symbolic universe there is no place for the otherness of difference (Baudrillard 1990: 141-2).

## Refining the Classification of Nostalgia

Nosological trends that dealt with the classification and arrangement of diseases in the eighteenth century reinforced the idea of nostalgia as a distinct disease. But there is some ambiguity in the classification, between nostalgia as 'love-sickness', 'mental' disease and/or melancholia.<sup>7</sup> In the latter half of the eighteenth century, many medical writers especially focused on the incidence of nostalgia amongst the armies of Western Europe. As Jackson explains, Jerome Gaub's *De regimine mentis* (1705-1780) associated dimensions of hope and love with nostalgia by alluding to nostalgia or 'homesickness' as well as 'love-sickness' among the "Harmful Corporeal Effects of Unrequited Love". According to Gaub, the "Beneficial Corporeal Effects of Hope in Connection with Various Ailments" are found in "the sufferers from homesickness who are revived by hope alone when first they ready themselves to return to their native lands"(Jackson 1984: 376).

Jackson contends that the discourse of mental illness also forged alignments with nostalgia, when the status of nostalgia as a distinct disease was strengthened by the extensive nosological schemes of this era. Francois Boisser de Sauvages (1706-1767) classified nostalgia as a mental disease under the term *Des Folies*. This was the eighth of his ten Classes of Diseases, but was included under the category *Les Bizarrerries* or *Les Morosites*, "the derangements of the desires", rather than under the traditional forms of madness or melancholia (Jackson 1986: 376). "Regarding treatment, he emphasised psychological measures, such as diverting entertainments and satisfying the sufferers' desires; but, he remarked that, often, starting out on a journey home was enough to bring about an improvement" (Jackson 1986: 376).



Jackson says that nostalgia was mentioned frequently in nosological literature of the period with subtle differences of meaning. Vogel, for example, describes it as “a species of melancholy”, and Cullen places nostalgia in Class 1V, Locales, instead of Class 11, Neuroses, where melancholia and mania were to be found.<sup>8</sup> Cullen expresses some disquiet about categorising nostalgia within the list of “erroneous appetites”. Thomas Arnold (1742-1816) designated nostalgia to one of the sixteen types of pathetic insanity (along with melancholy and sorrow), in his *Observations on Insanity* in the 1780s. Although Arnold classifies nostalgia within the category of melancholy, he does not consider it a form of melancholia, but by the nineteenth century medical discourse more firmly linked the two.

In 1818 Johann Christian Heinroth (1773-1843) included homesickness or nostalgia among the “subspecies, variations, and modifications of melancholia”, noting that “its entire character is that of pure melancholia” (Jackson 1984: 378). Well-known textbooks on mental disorders in the mid-nineteenth century clearly classify nostalgia amongst psychopathies, but, Jackson also points out Ernst Von Feuchtersleben’s (1806-1849) claim, that it was neither psychosis nor mental derangement: “Nostalgia...has been unnecessarily classed among the proper psychopathies, since it has no specific pathognomonic signs except that of a heavily oppressed spirit”, and “it can only pass into insanity when in its higher degree, and after a long duration” (Jackson 1984: 378).

The idea of classifying nostalgia according to the binary of sane/insane emerges in the mid-eighteenth century as a way of organising melancholia in more general terms. Wilhelm Griesinger (1817-1868) positions nostalgia amongst “States of Mental Depression–Melancholia”:

Another variety of melancholia is that which is characterised by a longing for one’s native land, and by the predominance of those ideas that refer to a return to one’s

home - HOMESICKNESS.... Naturally, nostalgia is not always a mental disease.... In itself it is a mournful disposition of spirit suggested by external circumstances (Griesinger cited in Jackson 1984: 378-9).

Other authors, such as Bucknill (1817-1897) and Tuke (1827-1895) focused on nostalgia within melancholia, regarding it as the “simple form” of melancholia with “no disorder of the intellect...no delusion or hallucination”(p.380) and emphasising the prevalence of nostalgia amongst soldiers. In the latter half of the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth, nostalgia was of most concern to military authorities and military physicians.

It gradually became absorbed into the melancholias as a form or variant then faded from nosological categories, and the idea of nostalgia as a formal disease gradually dissipated. Two late references are found from the 1890s with Tuke’s *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* which states:

There is a kind of melancholia which aetiologically has been called nostalgic melancholia, or nostalgia.... Nostalgia always represents a combination of psychical and bodily disturbances, and for this reason it must always be defined as a disease, and may become the object of medical treatment (Jackson 1984: 380).

What Jackson describes as one of the “lingering traces” of the classification of nostalgia as a formal disease is found in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which defines nostalgia as “home-sickness, the desire when away to return home, amounting sometimes to a form of melancholia” (p.380). Jackson concludes that in the twentieth century, armies, refugees and those who are displaced and dislocated have been dealt with “without returning to the concept of nostalgia”(p.380). In this way Jackson charts the removal of nostalgia from the dominant medical lexicon. As Starobinski points out in what follows, nostalgia now shifts from its direct association with pathology and comes to connote the nostalgic

subject of psychoanalytic and psychological interest who internalises their immersion in the present time and place while longing or pining for a past object, time and place.

### **The Village Interiorised**

From a philosophical rather than medical angle Jean Starobinski (1966) argues that the invention of the term ‘nostalgia’ was the result of finding a means of putting a specific feeling, or emotion into medical terminology. Medical tradition of the seventeenth century was well able to detail “the symptoms and symptomatic lesions” of melancholic discourse, but this same tradition “had never formulated the possibility of any difficulties arising as a result of a temporary separation from one’s normal surroundings” (p. 84). According to Starobinski,

[a]s long as the patient does not think of summoning the aid of a doctor, as long as medical terminology does not possess any term with which to designate it, the disease does not exist. It is scarcely a paradox to state that these diseases exist as diseases only as a result of the attention which is paid to them (Starobinski 1966: 85).

Starobinski emphasises the attention Hofer gave to *Heimweh* when he gave it a Greek name and “the appropriate classical trappings” by joining the words “return” and “sorrow” and producing “a pedantic neologism” (p. 85). When this disease gradually moves from the provinces, and sufferers begin to seek professional diagnoses, Starobinski notes the power of words to provoke fear and the transmission of ‘nervous’ or ‘mental’ disease. He argues that Swiss soldiers and English sailors from the seventeenth century onwards were especially prone to nostalgia, but recalls that they were also faced with “a subordinate and monotonous life” in the army or at sea. Starobinski asks why such young Swiss men are especially susceptible to nostalgia when they enter foreign milieux. In the excerpt below, he mentions the particular

significance of physical and emotional attachments between a Swiss child and his mother. The terms denoting the past that is missed and not forgotten include the embodied sensations of “soup”, “milk”, the “loving care” of “their mothers” and “the freedom”. These are opposed to the present where the men experience “deprivation” and “loss of childhood”.

It is hard for them to forget the loving care with which their mothers surrounded them. They miss the soups which they used to have for breakfast, the thick milk from their own valley, and perhaps also the freedom which they enjoyed in their own country...the modern psychiatrist should be grateful to Johannes Hofer for understanding straight off the role of this deprivation: the loss of childhood, of “oral satisfactions,” of motherly coaxing (Starobinski 1966: 87).

It is significant that Starobinski’s essay discusses the world of the emotions, beauty, joy, the senses and freedom, all in a kind of symbolic exchange, are strongly evoked by Starobinski’s description of “exile, alpine music, sad, tender recollections, golden visions of childhood”, leading to “an acoustic theory of nostalgia”(p. 93). This initiated both a romantic theory of music and “even the definition of romanticism” (p. 93), although “for the Romantics, nostalgia was a disease that could neither be cured or assuaged” (p. 94). Starobinsky recalls that Kant suggests that nostalgia indicates the loss of youth, “an age that is forever beyond his [the subject’s] reach.... His childhood is not given back to him”(p. 94). This constitutes “the metaphorical expression of a much more painful rupture, the separation of man from the ideal...[where] he learns what natural love and deep attachments are worth and lives in accordance with this knowledge” (p. 95).

The movement of nostalgia from clinical medicine to psychiatry heralds the comparative disappearance of the term ‘nostalgia’ altogether. Starobinski remarks on the pejorative poetic meaning of nostalgia since then: “the word implies a useless

yearning for a world or for a way of life from which one has been irrevocably severed” (p. 101).

As Starobinski’s account notes, by reiterating memories of the “loving care with which their mothers surrounded them”, nostalgic discourse generates the desire to return to the state of childhood itself, as a place where responsibilities and demands are not placed upon the individual. The instrument and focus of this longing is the mother who unstintingly provides “oral satisfactions” (food) as well as emotional and psychological scaffolding. The object of this longing is completely unattainable in pragmatic terms: the adult cannot become a child again, but one can regress in memory to a time and place when all desires were met.

The next chapter explains how psychoscientific discourse within the context of increased urbanisation focused on the failure of the individual to adapt to a new society without calling this nostalgia. In Starobinski’s analysis: “The theory of nostalgia put the accent on the original environment (on the *heim*) [whereas] the theory of inadaptation accentuates the paramount necessity of reintegration into an existing milieu” (p.101). Originally, the urge to return home literally meant a real spatial and geographical place but, as Starobinsky contends, the family unit came to replace the role of the village. Parents have replaced the place of birth and psychoanalysis situates the feelings of childhood within theories of regression and fixation, thus, “[t]he village is interiorized” (Starobinsky 1966: 103). The critical point is that in Starobinski’s reading, nostalgia as a theory of social adaptation inevitably concerns the loss of a symbolic realm that one had experienced in childhood.

## Modern Nostalgia:

### (1) The Sentimentalised Mother

In the modern experience...the retreat of the origin is more fundamental than all experience, since it is in it that experience shines and manifests its positivity; it is because man is not contemporaneous with his being that things are presented to him with a time that is proper to them (Foucault, 1994: 335).

Foucault defines the modern experience as the humanist narrative of progressive human emancipation, as a process whereby “man” sequentially moves from “origins” into the “inner realm of being”: self-consciousness or the sovereignty of what is directly given to consciousness, of lived experience. Consequently, spatiality becomes a dominant referent and subject/object dichotomies prevail.<sup>9</sup> The next section considers how modern representations of nostalgia might characterise the longing for symbolic exchange that occurred amidst major discontinuities in modes of social organisation following European expansion and colonisation.<sup>10</sup> Ashcroft *et al* describe these discontinuities as the pace and scope of change and the nature of modern institutions, separating modern social institutions from traditional social orders (1998: 145-6).

Modernity is marked by the emergence of new, more ephemeral modes of representing both reality and value. Jackson Lears (1994) claims that “[i]n a developing money economy, paper became a vehicle for fantasy. The proliferation of literary and monetary fictions, novels and banknotes, allowed signifiers to float more easily, to become disembodied from specific objects like flesh or gold” (p.54).

In the mid-nineteenth century United States, discourses of romanticism generated by literary conventions valorised private life over public and constructed the sentimental idiom of domesticity. The bourgeois home became however a designated space for the emotional needs of an expanding capitalist society. At home

there are genuine human relations untroubled by the corruptions of society; there a man can 'be himself' with his wife, who is devoted to caring for his children. In the utopian literature of domesticity home is a stable, secure realm where personal relations are characterised by faith and surety. It is everything the outside world is not.

The gospel of contentment was the sentimental alternative for accumulation; its doctrines were articulated from pulpits, in women's magazines, suggesting a genuine alternative to the individualist striving of dominant culture. The irony was that home was a haven from market-driven behaviour but was increasingly the place one had to leave en route to responsible adulthood (Lears 1994: 77).

The leaving of such a home to make one's way in the world became an integral part of many texts in the early nineteenth century. Lears notes that home-leaving was sufficiently traumatic enough to make the sentimental vision of a vine-covered cottage and the old home-place appealing, although many of those who created and sustained the domestic ideal, led rootless lives.

The extraordinary resilience of the domestic ideal owes something to the common psychic experience of both its creators and its audiences: the trauma of leaving home in a society that increasingly required the severing of family ties as a prerequisite for adulthood (Lears 1997: 77).

This creation of the domestic ideal is centred in the domestic household with the mother as its sentimentalised centrepiece. By the late nineteenth century however increasing mechanisation makes problematic the preservation of land-as-mother, which is reliant upon some memory of a fantasy of wholeness and the pastoral world of warmth and plenty. Lears says that this conflict is reflected in the media culture of chromolithography that turned increasingly to advertising to represent an iconography of abundance appealing to those metropolitan consumers who were only recently removed from the land.

They offered reassuring genre scenes, nestling visions of abundance in settings of self-sufficient agriculture and extended kinship ties. They reconstructed a personal past redolent with fantasies of childhood bliss and pre-oedipal harmony. The late nineteenth century ideal of *Gemeinschaft* – the self-sufficient organic community

—achieved its embodiment in commercial imagery long before it was codified in sociological texts (Lears 1994: 102-3).

## **Modern Nostalgia:**

### **(2) Disenchantment**

Lears introduces us to the Weberian notion of disenchantment and the sociological engagement with the political and economic shifts occurring throughout modernity. This discourse generates the terms, images and concepts characterising discontinuities between the more traditional cultural forms of symbolic exchange and newly introduced economic social forms and processes.

Turner's account (1987) argues that modern nostalgia where there is the uncomfortable state of existing in an alien social world, is a critical theme in constituting the problem of modernity and modern consciousness. The nostalgic or melancholic person in the late nineteenth century is uncomfortable in their world because they experience modern social reality as illusory. "For the nostalgic the world is alien" (p. 49). This reflects a valorisation of nostalgia that characterises the traditions of moral philosophy from theological discourse to philosophical anthropology. In those latter discourses, nostalgia meant human alienation in specific natural and social worlds. Now, however, the subject of nostalgia, of consciousness and self-consciousness, is aware that being human meant separation from the material world entirely. Following Marx and Heidegger, Turner argues that this nostalgia denotes a theory of time, finitude and death, and is a basic condition of human estrangement that generates sociological, cultural and political discourse (p.150).



There are four major dimensions to what Turner calls the “nostalgic paradigm”(p. 150-151) and this in effect recapitulates all of this section: In the first, (dimension) there is the awareness of a past world, in time and space, that was a golden age of ‘homefulness’ that is lacking in the present. As I have also indicated in chapter four, the Abrahamic religions are nostalgic in their theology of grace, since the time when humanity fell from union with God. The second dimension represents a past world with a unity of human relations, knowledge, personal experiences and religious certainty that is “fractured” by catastrophic social processes such as markets, capitalism and urban living. It constitutes a past rural world, when the past meant genuine experience (Rousseau), God (Nietzsche), and values (Weber).

In the third dimension, nostalgia is represented as the loss of a world of individual freedom and autonomy. Here, the past means genuine social relationships, belief in God and moral coherence unconstrained by social processes and state bureaucracies (Weber’s ‘iron cage’). Turner describes for the fourth, the loss of simplicity, personal authenticity, emotional spontaneity, and the peasant emotions subdued by court culture and bourgeois society. It includes the loss of gluttony, spontaneity and personal restraint along with the lack of personal freedoms and sexual spontaneity (p.151). Citing Marcuse’s psychoanalytic influences, Turner argues that this aspect of nostalgia reflects contemporary civilisation as “a political system of surplus repression” (p.151).

Turner’s paradigm can also be read in Baudrillardian terms:

The true revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, of modernity is the radical destruction of appearance, the disenchantment of the world and its abandonment to the violence of interpretation and history (Baudrillard 1981: 231).

The notion of disenchantment comes from Weber’s scrutiny of modernity which could be called nostalgic, indeed Turner identifies Weber’s critique as such. Weber’s

approach to modern capitalism differentiates between what I am now calling “past symbolic” and “present economic and political” realms and offers the sharp critical analysis of modern rationality, subjectivity and authorities from the perspective of nostalgia. Weber’s critique of modernity evoked a concept of disenchantment with the processes of modernisation, rationalisation and intellectualization. Such disenchantment reflects, “a culture that devalues all “magical” and “mysterious” unfathomable powers in favour of grounded knowledge where problems and mysteries are worked out logically. All imperatives flow from the non-human – from gods, beasts, spirits, magic” (Baudrillard 1990: 141).

Turner’s observation is that the metaphor of nostalgia was the predominant motif of both classical sociology and the Frankfurt School: “Critical theory involves implicitly a nostalgic appeal to the past (that is to a situation where community and values were integrated) in order to develop an anti-modern critique of mass culture, the cultural industry and modern forms of consumerism” (Turner, 1994: 119). This distinction reflects the shift from older conventional forms of inequality to a modern society whereby economic capital became the main governing authority. The emergence of capitalist regulations of the modern era, and modernity in its consumer form, was predominant in the work of social philosophers such as Marx, Weber, Simmel, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Adorno.<sup>11</sup> Turner summarises this legacy:

Since we live in a world of mere perspectives, the absence of stability in ethics and values results in a certain loss of direction, which in turn leads to pessimism, disenchantment and melancholy. The world has become unhomelike, because we have lost all naïveté and all certainty of values (Turner 1994: 123).

The result of this philosophy, according to Turner, was a significant cultural critique, (particularly from Nietzsche) against the “pretensions of bourgeois culture and values.” This critique presupposes that the subject can be positioned as a secular

ascetic in a cultural context designating the reproduction of knowledge and classical culture. Turner argues that it was the development of consumer culture that destroyed such notions (p.123).

## Sounds No Longer Spoken

In what Foucault calls the Classical age the discourses classifying nostalgia generate home as the feminised world of domesticity and 'enchantment', a realm of pleasure and comfort that reifies one's past childhood past and home. In other words, nostalgia articulates a longing for the lost domestic, affective, feminine (maternal), reality the mind and body long for when separated from it by time and/or space. The medicalisation of nostalgia generates an attainable vision of 'home' that concomitantly pathologises the state of being 'away from home' based on observable bodily disease. This is linked to the binary positive/negative within nationalism that valorises the native land compared to the foreign land. The nostalgia of the foreigner presumes a home that is privileged in comparison to the foreign country.

Classical nostalgia assumes the nostalgic is able to return home, and frequently does, but the increasing disparity between *home* and *away* is also reflected in the disparity between the representational systems of each context. This is the era when there is a fraught juncture between the negative present that the authoritative early modern and modern linguistic label seeks to describe, and the articulation of feelings and experiences concerning a past time and place of symbolic exchange. The transformation of nostalgia from the physiological to the psychological reflects the dynamics of discourses of medicine, philosophy, literature and history which evolve as more arbitrary and linear sign systems that effectively obliterate older forms of representation, of the sensation and embodiment of symbolic exchange,

where “[w]ords evoke, point, seduce, act rather than denote and connote” (Grace 2000: 19).

This chapter has traced how history imposes linearity and coherency on the past when positivist, empiricist science authorises forms of differentiation and when linguistics echoes the subject and object of economics and consumerism. This is “the violence of interpretation and of history” that so concerns Baudrillard (1981: 231), Weber, and other critical theorists. The nostalgia of sociological critique reflects how anyone’s memories or dreams of simpler, more direct, and more strongly emotionally bonded social relationships and small, relatively isolated integrated communities threaten the anonymous relations of the modern metropolis. Consequently, it is argued that modern hegemony authorised the dissolution and repression of nostalgic feelings by correlating deep longings for one’s home with the ‘useless yearning’, denoting the over-romanticised feminised and sentimentalised past. The next chapter explores how the psychosciences sustain this trajectory.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'invention' in keeping with Werner Sollors' usage that recognises the general cultural constructedness of the modern world (1995: 55).

<sup>2</sup> Nostalgia was 'invented' in a European environment where there was a significant movement of peoples associated with territory, wars and discoveries and where voyages of discovery were moving over vast distances from the hub of Europe. James Belich claims that the voyage characterising this period for New Zealanders was the search for the 'opulent Great South Land' which led Abel Janszoon Tasman's Dutch expedition to this country in 1642 (Belich 1996: 119).

<sup>3</sup> According to Seán Burke, Kant developed an epistemological transcendental idealism where the perceived world is only conceivable through the workings of a transcendental ego imposing *a priori* categories of space, time and causality upon the ultimately inaccessible objects of experience. Kant's assertion is that "the only world we know is the world constructed through innate mental categories (Burke 1995: xx). Burke argues that the generative capacity of the transcendental ego invited metaphorical extension into the aesthetic realm through the mode of imagination that moulded this in poetry and literature. The older categories of imitation and inspiration are redistributed within the new economy of subjectivity, and the mind must now represent itself representing reality (p. xxi).

<sup>4</sup> Benedict Anderson (1983) characterises the lexicographic impact on modern nation building in the West as being the emergence of a new sense of time, the demise of Latin as a universal language, and the rise of print capitalism enabling the reproduction of vernacular texts.

<sup>5</sup> A combination of historical, social and technical changes, including the work of authors, publishers and circulating library operators, provided opportunities for writers to generate identifications between readers and the characters' complex personal relationships. The impersonal authority of print is complemented by its capacity for securing a complete penetration of the reader's subjective life

<sup>6</sup> Kristeva (1993) explains a specific concept of foreignness inherited from the French Enlightenment, an era promulgating a brutal persecution of foreigners in the name of nationalism. At that time nationalism "was raised to the level of a politico-economic, restrictive, and potentially totalitarian concept and reality" (pp. 25-26). Kristeva argues that in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the sovereignty of the nation was asserted, heedless of the privileges of state or class. Following Hannah Arendt, she asks what happens, then to those people without nations and territories.

<sup>7</sup> Bryan Turner's essay "A Note on Nostalgia" (1987) considers nostalgia understood as melancholia in ancient, medieval and modern moral and medical thought. In Ancient thought, nostalgia was associated with the four humours. "These humoral theories conceived the world in terms of four basic elements (fire, earth, air and water), four qualities (heat, cold, dry and dampness), four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile) and four personality types (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic)" (1987b: 21). Melancholia was analysed as an excess of black bile, but also associated with the Gregorian seven deadly sins. On the other hand Aristotle and Greek historians suggest that the melancholic subject is constituted with wit, intelligence and foresight. Melancholia has represented different things to different philosophies: bodily disequilibrium and the instability of moods (Plato), the presence of passions (Arabic) and an intellectual condition (Stoic). In medieval literature and astrology, melancholy is associated with 'tristitia' (dejection and sorrow), 'desperatio' (despair), 'acedia' (apathy and sloth) (p.21). These are forms of depression and 'dryness', necessitating renewed religious commitment (Turner 1987: 22). This discourse of

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melancholia pre-dates nostalgia but is significant as medical discourse later refined its classification of nostalgia in relation to melancholia. Melancholia is important in generating a framework of individualised sorrow.

<sup>8</sup> Within the *Locales* (“a disorder of part, and not of the whole body”), Order II was named *Dysorexiae* (“an erroneous or defective appetite”) and this included nostalgia together with bulimia, polydypsia, pica, satyriasis and nymphomania in its first section, entitled “Erroneous Appetites”(cited in Jackson 1986: 377).

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger (1949) describes how technology situates human experience within a framework where space is valorised over time, and where the world is object to humanity’s subject. In Heidegger’s view, modernity “begins that way of being human which means the realm of human capabilities as a domain given over to measuring and executing, for the purpose of gaining mastery over that which is a whole” (1949: 132). The need to control changes in, and to dominate, the environment is indicative of the spatial shifts linked to technical expansion. As Heidegger explains, the Greek way of seeing and knowing constituted in *techne* is likened to actual technical expansion, a metaphor describing how the seeing of the other also shapes the other (1949: 13).

<sup>10</sup> Foucault raises the possibility of regarding modernity more as an attitude than as a period of history; it is a specific way of relating to contemporary reality, of thinking, feeling, acting and behaving. Citing Baudelaire’s ‘acute’ awareness of modernity, Foucault notes that it is not the consciousness of the discontinuity of time that characterises modernity, but “adopting a certain attitude with respect to this movement...recapturing something eternal within the present moment...the will to ‘heroize’ the present” (1984: 39-40). Modernity is more than “just a form of relationship to the present [it is] as well as a mode of relationship that has to be established to oneself” (p.41).

<sup>11</sup> Marshall Berman’s text *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (1982) describes Marx’s alternative to capitalism and commitment to modernity as ambiguous in that his future socialist society is profoundly nostalgic, if a forward-looking nostalgia, involving the absence of differentiation and inequalities and with socialism, or ‘homelike’ qualities which remove the ‘alienated’ sense of the nostalgic subject.

## CHAPTER SIX: AUTHORISATION - THE TECHNIQUES OF 'PSY'<sup>1</sup>

A little too much woman in the automaton, a little too much automaton in the woman, the same painful threat of heterogeneity disturbs (Cixous 1974: 52)

This concluding chapter of Part Two, first contextualises the discursive shift early in the twentieth century whereby the individual person and personal individuality become the focus of psychoscientific techniques.<sup>2</sup> Then there is a critical reading of Freud's psychoanalytic explanation of 'homesickness' in his essay "The Uncanny" (1919). This early psychoanalytic text was prior to the exponential growth of consumption, signs and material production in North America and Western Europe in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as modernity came to constitute a social relation of economic exchange, a political economy founded on a logic of accumulation and power.

As outlined in Chapter Five, nostalgia forfeited its temporarily valorised position as a medical category throughout modernity. Starobinski recounts how the loss of interest in curing nostalgia or homesickness introduced a pejorative denotation where nostalgia comes to mean a useless longing for a world, or way of life, from which one has been irrevocably severed (1966: 101). This severance reflected the expansion of economic exchange, where goods and people were amove beyond traditional borders. It was therefore associated with modern forms of nationalism, urbanisation, dislocation and mechanisation. In the following sections, I trace how psychoanalytic text constructs nostalgia within capitalist structures that regulated the modern literary and scientific subject and 'his' reaction to changes in social conditions, including changes in the status of women.

## Context (1) The Millennium of Sex and Desire

While psychoanalysis seemingly inaugurates the millenium [sic] of sex and desire, it is perhaps what orchestrates it in full view before it disappears altogether. In a certain way, psychoanalysis puts an end to the unconscious and desire, just as Marxism put an end to the class struggle, because it hypostatizes them and buries them in their theoretical position (Baudrillard 1977: 14).

The first psychoanalytic texts accompanied conservative western politics regulating 'identity' and 'difference' as a means of intensifying the codification of economic value and the structuring of the production and exchange of objects. This codification authorised certain types of social organisation where large numbers of people were brought together in schools and workplaces. In accord with Foucault's analysis, one might understand that psychoanalytic, psychological and psychiatric ('psy') discourses interpellated people into the domain of knowledge as objects of a hierarchical and normative gaze, making it possible to qualify, classify, and punish individuals (Foucault 1977: 184-5). In Rose's words, capitalism required a conceptual apparatus that authorised the management of workers so as to "constitute new sectors of reality and make new aspects of existence practicable" (Rose 1996: 102).

The psychosciences consequently generated a new language of sexual difference and of need, lack, want and desire in accordance with the logic shaping the accumulation of wealth and the extraction of a surplus. This substantiates Baudrillard's claim that although psychoanalytic discourse seems to contest the assumption of presence and equivalence, it is complicit in the economic and productive (Grace 2000: 178). In a Baudrillardian reading, the loss of symbolic exchange characterises the modern subject; "living a world where man is 'unsheltered,' without the metaphysical comfort granted by



the gods, or the natural context of desire and unable to derive any ultimate meaning from the world itself" (1990: 72). The symbolic realm where "signs are exchanged without phantasms, with no hallucination of reality" (Baudrillard 1976: 95) was being muted and gradually eradicated in part by the construction of a psychologically individualised self.

The widespread complicity of the psychoanalytic and economic is emphasised by Anthony Cascardi's assertion that psychoanalysis generated the modern literary self as a 'nostalgic' hero, situated amidst "displacement from the real or imagined authenticity of the communities of the past and the impossibility of a complete reintegration of substance and form" (Cascardi 1992: 72). Cascardi notes that in the world of the modern novel, each individual action and object in it denotes "transcendental homelessness". Moreover Seán Burke (1995) claims that whereas fiction prior to Freud was considered "outside the author in theological or inspirational grounds, or as an expression of 'an inner voice'" (p.10), Freud affirmed that the voice of the other is the voice of individual consciousness and attempted to restore control by the subject over and against the childhood memories and repressed drives constituting the unconscious. Notably, Burke claims that for Freud writing fiction is seen psychologically as an adult renegotiation of the childhood urge to discharge socially unacceptable wishes in the form of fantasy (p.10).

In its exclusion of the strength and authority of mothers, women, and female sexuality therefore, psychoanalysis provides a hegemonic narrative where the masculine is positive and "synonymous with power and production" and the feminine is the seductive 'other' (Grace 2000: 150). The structural logic underpinning psychoanalytic forms of gender identity and sexual difference were generated by the codified logic necessitated by the governance of economic structures by "the phallic exchange

standard” (p. 39). In what follows we trace the hegemonic code through which psychoanalysis reiterates these terms of social domination (Baudrillard 1973: 134-5).

As an invention of the nineteenth century that is still influential in the twenty-first, albeit in modified forms, psychoanalysis is unerring in its radical anti-humanist conception of subjectivity as split between conscious and unconscious psychic domains. As Peter Gay recounts, the first text on psychoanalysis, “a preliminary communication,” was published in January 1893 by Freud and Breuer, and incorporated into *Studies in Hysteria* in 1895 (Gay 1995: xxxiv). The latter publication gives an account of a psychoanalytic method of examining and treating a ‘hysterical’ phenomenon amongst middle-class Viennese women by analysing how they deviated from the normal acquisition of gender identity. Freud’s psychosexual cure included linguistic techniques of free association, hypnosis, dream analysis, fantasies and parapraxis. “Psychoanalysis,” Freud wrote in 1913, “is a medical procedure which aims at the cure of certain forms of nervous disease (the neuroses) by a psychological technique” (1913: 165).

Freud’s theories make gender the very basis of identity. The psychoanalytic idea of sexuality generates a relationship between gender identity and interpretation on the one hand and the unconscious on the other. The binaries of male/female were augmented by the adult/child structuration, which substantiates how psychic problems in adulthood are to be explained in relation to the early childhood acquisition of feminine and masculine identity. The image of the child was formulated in relation to both the id and the theory of infantile sexuality. Jane Flax explains that Freudian text displaces the primary mother-child relationship by making the oedipal struggle pivotal and by theorising primary narcissism, with a drive-governed infant, as the original human state (Flax 1990: 18).

The suppression of women's personal and economic autonomy was a dominant theme of conservative western economic and political movements echoing the efforts of business interests to 're-domesticate' women after World War 1. In America, for example traditional biological reasons for keeping women at home had been discredited by the women's movement and by women's war efforts. In the 1920s and 30s, however, and according to Lillian Faderman, "laypersons discovered Freud's theories" and "the apostles of natural female passivity and those who pretended to see disaster if the 'course of nature' were changed were rampant...[and] they felt compelled to reassert again and again man's natural superiority" (p.332).

Psychoanalysis encourages individuals to imagine themselves as distinctively 'psychological,' a move that reflects marketing knowledge that such identity can be commodified and become profitable. As Joel Pfister argues, 1920s and 30s America constructed a "full fledged psychological essence-and-identity industry" (1997: 168). Subsequently, the representation of psychological disturbances in texts and therapy constituted a new 'psychical depth', in accord with an historical shift in how meaning regulates the emotions and 'inner' power. Psychological discourse gave to the family and to female sexuality what Pfister calls "an unfathomed subtextual meaningfulness and dimensionality that could be read as disturbing, yet also as intriguing, and that could be interpreted as a source of conflict, yet also as the basis of individuality" (1997: 182).<sup>3</sup>

The next section begins an analysis of Freud's widely popularised and disseminated psychoscientific discourse authorising "the new therapeutics of finitude [where] suffering is not to be endured but to be reframed by expertise, to be managed as a challenge and a stimulus to the powers of the self" (Rose 1996: 159). Prior to that, is a

discussion of Laura Otis' analysis of Freudian ways of conceptualising the past and how 'organic memory theory' authorises the Freudian deduction that a problematic relationship to the past might be 'cured'.

## Context (2) Psychoanalytic Memory

Freud did not create the idea that memory resembles heredity; he inherited it, and his interpretation and promotion of it are of critical importance because it is largely through his new discipline that it survived on into the twentieth century (Otis 1994: 182).<sup>4</sup>

As nostalgia primarily focuses on the individual's relationship to the past, it is important to consider how Freudian text conceptualises memory, or one's relationship with things not of the here and now. Otis' (1994) text *Organic Memory* discusses Freud's utilisation of the nineteenth century belief that specific memories can be inherited and concomitantly that identity does not primarily evolve around family and kinship, but is pivotal to national interests. In organic memory theory which unites medicine, science and nationalism, the argument is that specific aspects of ancestral identity do not die with one's ancestor but are organically reconstituted within the tissues of those still living, who therefore can be made accountable for the past actions of their predecessors.

Otis' contention is that nineteenth century theories of organic memory seriously impact upon modern medicine and politics today. She claims that this theory comes from a focus on origins that melded together memory and heredity, and included the understanding that an individual inherited memories, along with physical characteristics, from ancestors. "The theory of organic memory placed the past in the individual, in the body, in the nervous system; it pulled memory from the domain of the metaphysical into

the domain of the physical with the intention of making it knowable" (Otis 1994: 3). The argument about organic memory is that racial and ancestral experiences are remembered unconsciously, in a manner analogous to how everyday experiences are consciously experienced.<sup>5</sup>

According to Otis, organic memory theory consisted of two central analogies aligning memory with heredity, and individual development with racial development. The theory relies strongly on analogy, and analogical and comparative logic is reflected in the ubiquitous use of terms such as "represent," "resemble," "higher," and "lower" (p.7). This accords with late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature in the fields of child psychology and racial classification. Those discourses argued that an organism passed through various evolutionary forms; the child was regarded as an embryonic adult and the "darker" races as embryonic forms of northern European ones (p.7). Most significantly, organic memory theory transmitted ideas that enabled one's history to be read from one's body.

As one of the most influential of twentieth-century thinkers, Freud widely transmitted the idea of an unconscious memory of ancient events. Psychoanalysis made "reasonable" the claim that a person could remember their own infancy and the experiences of one's ancestors, and that these memories are stored and reproduced through the unconscious. The Freudian search for the past not only related to the neurotic client but also included the analyst who was implicated in the attempt to both analyse and cure those who suffered from a 'problematic' relationship to the past.<sup>6</sup>

## Nostalgic Games of Truth and Error

The games of truth and error through which being is historically constructed as experience; that it is a something that can and must be thought (Foucault 1985: 6-7).

Here I investigate how classical Freudian text constructs psychoanalytic nostalgia, defined by Derrida as “a longing for an impossible return to the peace of the maternal womb”(1993: 150). The discourse of this is textually organised in hegemonic terms so that psychoscientific modernity systematically excludes a prior sociality. These attempts make visible and manageable the nostalgia or homesickness for a realm ungoverned by the structural logic of capital. In terms of feminist interests “The ‘Uncanny’” clearly indicates how Freud, the mouthpiece authorising the text in 1919, was also controlling representations of the feminine.

### Reading The ‘UnCanny’’: (1) Freudian identity

I chose this essay for analysis because it is concerned with the dynamics of past and present, the familiar and unfamiliar and the kinds of social concerns that surround homesickness and nostalgia in modernity. Unlike the topos of nostalgia in Greek, Roman and Judaeo-Christian text, this essay written by Freud in 1919 bears the hallmarks of modern textual practice in that it generates the modern interchange between familiar or symbolic, and unfamiliar or economic worlds. The text asserts its ‘truth’ about “homesickness” in a manner that appears to guarantee its truth-value. The writing metaphysically situates itself not only so that it is understood as a unique, original,

perfectly constructed whole but also so that it hides how this is done, pre-empting any claims that might question this truth's very centrality.

The heading and title of the essay in its negative formulation is a reminder that the presence of meaning relies upon *différance*. The text indicates that the 'uncanny' of the title, is also the object of another study by Jentsch, and the subject of an etymological search, the topic of various novels, and the focus of an experience recounted by the narrator, and so on. In each of these iterations the title takes on a different function, lending some ambiguity to what is part of the 'uncanny' text and what is not.

With Freud's original quotation marks (The 'Uncanny') the reader gathers that the subject under discussion is a distinct or unusual word being used outside of its ordinary context. Freud does not write "'Uncanny' Feelings: a theory of repression", which is probably a more accurate scientific descriptor, but uses the truncated form of a novel, a movie, a new invention or desired commodity. However, although the 'uncanny' of the title is not constituted by science, the title suggests that the text is a scientific one, part of the psychosciences, or medicosciences, of the nineteenth century. The dominant terms and the structure of the essay are recognisably scientific and include the key terms: *investigation, analysis, elements, pathological, scientific knowledge, general application, proposition, conclusion, and field of research*.

What is most curious, however, is how in spite of this wholehearted display of key scientific terms, the object of analysis depends upon literary examples. The first sentence particularly highlights this, explaining how "The 'Uncanny'" concerns "a subject of aesthetics" (p.219). Because "aesthetics" is a term conventionally representing literary usage it tends to unsettle the semantic unity of the text. Freud subsequently

embarks on a detailed etymological analysis and provides numerous literary references within the scientific text, which serves to sustain this oppositionality (the binarism science/literature) while also instantiating textual ambiguity. Out of the essay's thirty-four pages, six are concerned with dictionary definitions and nineteen are directly related to literary text. Yet although only about a quarter of the essay is directly concerned with psychoanalytic terms and explanations, the psychoanalytic nature of the text is firmly forged by its first and last sentences when there is "a psychoanalyst" and "a psychoanalytic point of view". Writing in 1919, that is, Freud uses the essay form to explain the psychological term "the uncanny" As Gay (1995) notes, over a period of more than forty years Freud compiled scientific papers, case histories, papers on psychoanalytic technique, fundamental texts on dreams and on sexuality, anxiety and mental structure, as well as writing letters and essays in biography, sociology and literary analysis (p. xiv). To say then that this is "a Freudian text" presupposes that the reader knows the complexity of all of this.

The essay consists of three parts. Part I comprises binarily organised differentiations around "a core of feelings" (p.219-226) including beauty/fear, attraction/dread, sublimity/ horror, and affinity/repulsion. The longer Part II consists of examples of the uncanny: "the things, persons, impressions, events and situations which are able to arouse in us a feeling of the uncanny in a particularly forcible and definite form" (p.226-245). Part III however, develops the conclusion "an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once



more to be confirmed” (p. 249). This section discusses some of the key figurations, which assist Freud in authorising this conclusion.

In Part I there is a brief (seventeen line) incursion into “other languages” (including Latin, Greek, English, French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese) which “tell us nothing new” (p.221). Freud turns to the authority of the German language found in Daniel Sander’s *Worterbuch Sprache* (1860) or German dictionary. Throughout this there are italicised words “I have laid stress on” mostly consisting of grammatical variations of the word *heimlich*; (*heimliche*, *Heimlichkeit*, *heim’lig*, *heimelig*) (pp. 222-4). Then Freud emphasises the following single paragraph by italicising it amidst the plethora of polarities:

*The Zecks [a family name] are all ‘heimlich’. ... “ ‘Heimlich’...What do you understand by ‘heimliche’?” “Well...they are like a buried spring or a dried up pond. One cannot walk over it without always having the feeling that the water might come up again.” “Oh, we call it ‘unheimlich’; you call it ‘heimlich’. Well, what makes you think that there is something secret and untrustworthy about this family?” (Freud 1919: 223).*

One page later the narrator synthesises the contested terms *heimlich/unheimlich* and notes how the difference between the terms is collapsed. Freud argues that “what interests us most...is to find that among the different shades of meaning the word ‘*heimlich*’ exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, ‘*unheimlich*’. What is *heimlich* thus becomes *unheimlich*” (p. 224). The unified notion of the *heim*, the home, is actually premised upon the contradictory *unheimlich* and the suspicion ‘we’ of the *heim* build against the ‘other’. The familiar homeliness, or *heimlich*, which the text constructs is simultaneously frustrated.

The text then establishes a definition where “the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar”, and then proceeds to demonstrate in scientific fashion how this result came about. Freud explains that he has resolved the unending tension between life and death, presence and absence, by theorising a third term, the “canny/uncanny” that represents the very condition of this tension. The contradiction echoes the impossibility of fixing the relation between the polarities, familiar and unfamiliar, comfortable and strange, tame and wild, alive and lifeless. In this way, the contradictory “canny/uncanny” comes to be seen as complicit with the authoritative phallogentric constitution of both nostalgia and gender identities.

This issue is pursued by noting first how Freud as the narrator is multiply and authoritatively positioned. The text begins by announcing: “It is only rarely that a psychoanalyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics” (p.219). Here the term “a psychoanalyst” means that there is such a thing, forming a stable, unique, authentic identity. The third person is used again at the end of the first paragraph in the phrase, “he has to interest himself in some particular province of that subject” (p.219). This implies that “he” has a moral responsibility to pass on knowledge about repression, constituting the “surmounted modes of thought” and “subdued emotional impulses” that recur in “neurotic men”. The identity of Freud as the narrator is initially indicated by the third person term “a psychoanalyst” in the first line and then becomes “he” in paragraph two. In paragraph three however, the reader is included in the plural “we” and again in “one”. Overall, and to generate textual unity, the two most common referents throughout the text are “I” and “we”, “I” is established as the narrator “knows”, “confesses”, “apologises” and then indicates his mastery of the signifier by declaring, “I have laid

stress upon one or two passages by italicizing them” (p.222). This complexity constitutes the author-scientist who controls the narration as well as the one, who as a part of the narration, found himself “back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention” (p.237). The various textual positions of the “I”, “one”, “we” and “people” keep the reader slightly confused, because the subject is never a singular identity but an identity complicated by the excess of narrative and fictive voices.

As well as this authoritative and multiple positioning, Freud uses narrative techniques to draw his reader closer. Freud the narrator tells us that he is homesick because as “a psychoanalyst” he is at home neither as a scientist, a novelist or a poet. Although unwilling, he has apologetically undertaken to work in this remote field and produce “this present modest contribution of mine” (p.219). Freud draws his readership even closer by apologising for not having done his linguistic homework, especially for not examining “foreign literature...for reasons which, as may easily be guessed, lie in the times in which we live” (p.220). This gesture towards the war that had decimated Europe speaks directly to the German, or any European, reader by addressing a shared problem of social chaos and disorder. In this perspective “the times” is an articulation that assumes, rather than textually specifies, the war and chaos it signifies. Freud does not experience the war directly as he writes about it, but its return amidst “the times”, haunts him as a disruption and a cause of his confessed negligence.

The generalisation marking the statement “the times in which we live” has the effect of situating the narrator as an authority attempting to consolidate a psychoanalytic body of readers. The form of “The ‘Uncanny’” also reflects the modern masculinity of ‘power and production’ by being designed as an object of consumption. In the English

translations authoritative edition the essay is thirty-four pages long and, like many of Freud's texts, letters, papers and essays it is concise and presumably easy for the educated traveller to read and carry. Such a reader is indubitably male, a fluent German speaker, well educated, and knows his way around a dictionary with a little proficiency in, but not a lot of time for, foreign languages. He will identify with the masculine descriptors of the *boy*, a *student*, a *young man*, having "a beloved father", all identities constructed differentially to the 'others': the "lifeless", "waxwork figures", "dolls", "automata", the insane and epileptic, "neurotic men", the "madman" and perhaps also "inter-uterine existence". The text appeals to the sophisticated reader who is very familiar with poetry, comedic texts, science, Goethe, fairy tales, Dante, Shakespeare, English magazines, Italian city streets and Greek literature and reasonably familiar with Hoffmann's tales.

Although familiar with markers of Eurocentric masculinity and the "times in which we live", the masculine 'he' is not familiar with knowledges generating specifically unfamiliar kinds of "feelings" to do with women's bodies. This becomes a problem requiring psychoanalytic explanation for feelings that are not familiar, uncanny "things within the field of what is frightening" (p.219). The frightening "home-sickness" or nostalgia as such does not appear in the text until the end of Part II (on page 245) when the binary logic of difference between the terms – the familiar, or canny, *heimlich*, and the unfamiliar, uncanny and *unheimlich* – figures "home-sickness" as a productive force arranging imaginary desired and lost objects. By connecting the uncanny to the canny, the *unheimlich* to the *heimlich*, and the unfamiliar to the familiar homesickness/nostalgia is neither a distinct category of aesthetics nor of science, but a "psycho-medical"

construction that connects one to the other while not being a part of either. The essay thus generates conscious control over memories repressed by the unconscious, while authorising the massive phallogentric “cultural ideology” (Grace 2000: 39) based on the presence or absence of biological organs.

### Reading “The ‘Uncanny’”: (2) Love is *homesickness*?

To conclude this collection of examples, which is certainly not complete, I will relate an instance taken from psychoanalytic experience; if it does not rest upon mere coincidence, it furnishes a beautiful confirmation of our theory of the uncanny. It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that ‘Love is ‘homesickness’; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: ‘this place is familiar to me. I’ve been here before’, we must interpret the place as being his mother’s genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix ‘un’ [‘un-’] is the token of repression (Freud 1919: 245).

The “Love is homesickness” paragraph confirms Freud’s scientific claim that the uncanny is something secretly familiar that has undergone repression. The paragraph again brings the *Zecks* to light, “a buried spring or dried up pond” which, although appearing to be a safe place to walk, induces caution because of what might lie in wait below the surface. This image reiterates the central premise of the essay that “the unfamiliarity of repressed familiarity is uncanny”.

Nominalisations are ubiquitous in this paragraph: “this *collection* of examples...mere *coincidence*...a beautiful *confirmation*...a token of *repression*”. They all serve to tell the reader non-specifically that the constituent parts of the uncanny are

‘true’, while allowing the narrator to be vague enough for the reader to furnish examples from their own experience. It is a powerful rhetorical strategy, telling us that although the ‘narrator scientist’ is the purveyor of and authority on psychoanalytic knowledge, there is actually no ‘truth’ of the uncanny.

The dominant voice however is that of a European Jewish male who is also an authority on the category of humour called jokes. In 1905 Freud had written *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, a text notable for specific representations of women that reiterate conservative patriarchal values.<sup>7</sup> Most saliently, the “Love is homesickness” paragraph is the kernel around which layers of story telling enfold the central idea of homesickness/nostalgia within the economic vehicle of “a joking saying”. As Baudrillard contends, Freud’s theory of ‘the joke’ or *Witz* generates functional economic terms where the enjoyment provided by the signifier satisfies a specific need or desire. According to Baudrillard, the ‘joke’ in Freud’s rendition has the effect of freeing signification through processes of displacement and condensation so that “enjoyment emerges from a residue, an excess or a differential quantum of energy made available by the operation of the Witz” (Baudrillard 1976: 223).

In Freud’s text, the joking phrase “Love is home-sickness” performs two strategies. For one thing, the word “Love” is capitalised to suggest that there really is such a thing. For another, the truncated sentence with two emotions joined by the copula *is* seduces the reader into believing one thing – ‘Love’ – is indeed equivalent to the other – ‘home-sickness’. These strategies endeavour to fix the truth as static and enduring by establishing an equivalence between Being and presence; it is also familiar from homilies and epigrams such as: “I am the way, the truth and the life”, “God is love”, “Time is

money” and “Patience is enduring”. Such text draws together traditional idioms of control within a pseudo-scientifically-constructed ideal of identity. “Love is homesickness” is a short, straightforward, self-evident ‘truth’, the joke from which the rest of the text hangs.

Two other points are striking about Freud’s textual technique. First, this paragraph harbours a mixture of predicates with the verbs “neurotic men *declare* that they *feel*”, “a man *dreams*... and *says*...we must *interpret*”. The list of different verbs injects textual diversity, maximising the chances that the reader will accept the information in one form or another. Secondly, the paragraph embeds a story inside a story inside a story. This tends to overload our capacity to keep track of which statement refers to which thing. Is Freud giving the reader this as a conclusion to his “examples”, or do neurotic men say that female genital organs are uncanny? Is this about a joking saying? Or is Freud talking to the reader about how “we must interpret the place”? Such indeterminacy has the effect of making it difficult for the reader to ascertain which of the ‘realities’ the narrator is talking about. It is also a traditional and effective hypnotic induction technique that induces acceptance by the unconscious of the suggestions being made. These techniques complicate, and therefore further conceal, the fragile nature of Freud’s textual propositions.

### Reading “The ‘Uncanny’”: (3) The unfamiliar

Grosz argues that Freud’s analysis of love relations is an important but neglected aspect of psychoanalysis (1990: 115). “The ‘Uncanny’” backs up Grosz’s argument when the adult’s choice of love object is based on unresolved attachments to infantile object-

cathexes, as well as being genitally oriented and heteronormatively directed outside of the family. As Grosz contends, the anaclitic lover who is basically narcissistic loves the other so as to love himself: “He affirms his own position of mastery, control, activity – the phallic position – rather than her value as loved object” (p.115).

In “The ‘Uncanny’”, adult sexuality extends and reorganises infantile sexual drives, as processes of displacement and condensation manipulate the Oedipal claim “Love is home-sickness”, within the framework of “a joking saying”. The term “joking” reminds us why resignification is crucial to feminism. Freud’s text *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* situates Freud as the witty, self-deprecating, stand-up who delivers a long repertoire of misogynist jokes. Similar to this, the [Love is homesickness] text generates the feminine as clearly differentiated from masculine subjectivity. The feminine is produced at the edges of this text, amongst the class of things that are not familiar, are ‘other’, or frightening.<sup>8</sup>

To reiterate, feminine identity in Freud’s essay is either situated in deferential relationship to the masculine, or alluded to by body part alone. Essentialist oppositions structure the masculine in the positive and the feminine as the ‘other’ in each citation referring to the feminine: “the doll Olympia”, “his mistress”, “his mother”, “his nurse” (all p.229), “the nurse’s story” (p.228), “a woman patient” (p.233), “the patient’s mother” (p.244), “inter-uterine existence” (p.244), and “female genital organs” and “his mother’s genitals or her body” (both p.245). The disparity of gender reinforces how the presuppositions of textual content vigorously uphold the phallocentric proposal that women represent “the difference of the same”, the surrounds, the heterogeneity and the ‘object’ against which the masculine subject is defined. Specific reference to nostalgia or



“homesickness” draws upon the uncanniness instigated in “neurotic men” by “dread of being castrated” and “womb phantasies” in relation to their mother’s genitals or body (p.231).

This is an example of what Drucilla Cornell calls the “analepsis” of gender, a stratified system of gender differentiation that operates in cultures in which patriarchal lineage reinforces the Oedipal triangle (1995: 147). She describes how the language and conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis produce gendered subjects in and through the family.<sup>9</sup> By referring to the joke of love as the (nostalgic) yearning for the impossibly lost womb, Freud utilises processes of condensation and displacement, metaphor and metonymy, to position masculine sexuality exactly within the culture of the modern family, and explain how “love” displaces the maternal. To distinguish the “uncanny” central core of identity that is repressed amidst the heterogeneity of the text and to patrol the borders of identity, psychoanalytic authority tells the subject unequivocally who they must and must not identify with, who they belong to and who are strangers.

Baudrillard might argue that the fudging of the signifiers familiar/unfamiliar, canny/uncanny, love/homesickness, man/neurotic is a futile act because Freud never leaves the economic framework on which his theories are predicated. Baudrillard asserts: “For all its ‘hesitation’, [the psychoanalytic signifier] always designates what it represents as *value* in absentia, under the sign of repression. Value is no longer logically conveyed by the signifier, it haunts it phantasmatically” (1976: 227).

In the space between literature and science, and generating an enormous imaginative space around female genital organs, the ‘home’ one is ‘sick’ for is nothing more or less than the border circumscribing masculine identity and the fear of castration.

For the feminist reader the endless expanse of this border is disheartening, but for the Eurocentric masculine subject it is imperative. “The ‘Uncanny’” is a text which situates masculine homesickness for the maternal body in the individual psyche where the memory of the symbiosis with the mother is made knowable in psychoanalytic terms. The ongoing reiteration of this problem is foreshadowed at the conclusion where the last sentence refers to other psychoanalytic texts: “This problem has been discussed from a psychoanalytic point of view elsewhere” (p.252).

In conclusion, this chapter has examined how Freudian text constructs nostalgia while simultaneously authorising masculine sexuality and individuality.<sup>10</sup> The symbolic world of the maternal designates a realm that nevertheless threatens and provokes the modern phallogentric order of production. In direct proportion to its lethal potential, modernity has devised therapeutic techniques to cure one’s problematic longing for this ‘other’ realm. But analogous with Freud’s buried spring, or a dried up pond that one can never walk over without having the feeling that the water will come up again, perpetual haunting by ‘otherness’ is “inevitable” (Baudrillard 1976: 2).

## **Discussion of Part Two**

The chapters in Part Two advance this research project by exploring how the problem of nostalgia was managed within earlier authoritative western texts. Certain technologies of memory, writing and rhetoric generated nostalgia that authorises the phallogentric regulation of law and knowledge. In Ancient Greek, Roman and Judaeo-Christian text, mythology and theology instantiated nostalgia at “the level of the body” - which was

unquestionably the masculine body – regulated by the ordinances of the Jewish or Greco-Roman state. Constituting the yearning for the loss of a ‘paradise’, these texts effect an identification with a past that is determined by present-day authority.

Chapter Five considers the invention of the word ‘nostalgia’ in the seventeenth century. The textual reflection of medicalised nostalgia in terms of positivist empiricist rationality means that strongly embodied signs of being ‘homesick’ gradually lost their fascination and nostalgia became a “useless yearning”. In the twentieth century nostalgia is refigured at a psychological level, so that the pain reflecting memories generating the loss of the symbolic realm of childhood become the Freudian ‘joke of love’.

Although the chapters that make up Part Two reflect western nostalgia in widely heterogeneous times and places, they all configure nostalgia from a patriarchal perspective. Shifts in early modernity eventuate in Freud’s modern theories of psychoanalysis that codify gender identity and sexuality so that nostalgia is allied with, what Grace calls,

the construction of male and female, masculine and feminine as a dichotomous structure that marks and demarcates individuals.... [It is] a semiological reduction of the symbolic; on other words it is a form of ideology barring the possibility of symbolic exchange and instituting the order of identity (Grace 2000: 37).

The exploration of the meanings of nostalgia in authoritative historical text provides a range of theories and concepts that not only augments contemporary nostalgic literature but also brings us to a conceptual space within which contemporary women’s experiences of nostalgia might be read. The next chapter focuses on the central concern of this project: the critical appraisal of women’s nostalgias in the late-capitalist and consumerist era.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> This term comes from Nikolas Rose's critical history of the psychosciences and disciplines – psychology, psychiatry and their cognates – “because they have brought into existence a variety of new ways in which human beings have come to understand themselves and do things to themselves” (1996: 2).

<sup>2</sup> Russell Meares describes how men such as William James and James Mark Baldwin developed the nineteenth century psychological ‘self’ in the United States “intrigued by the phenomena of individual consciousness and by the problem of expressing in simple language their intricate nature” (Meares 1992:1).

<sup>3</sup> Pfister claims that the subjective is a diversion from social issues. He stresses that the education and privatisation of the upper and middle classes within therapeutic culture and the psychology industry results in more focus on subjective concerns than about “what and who makes a homeless person homeless” (1997: 25).

<sup>4</sup> Otis supports this statement by citing how Mendel's laws in 1900 and Morgan's experiments with *Drosophila* genetics tended to discredit organic memory theory. By the 1940s, she claims, it was espoused by few reputable biologists but some “like Freud and Mann, continued to believe in them” (Otis 1994: 184).

<sup>5</sup> Organic memory theory corresponded to an era when neurologists were mapping the brain, nations were mapping territories, and identities were established by making boundaries and linking theoretical images with material places in complex and multifarious ways. The idea was that “[t]o have a real sense of national identity, a people needed a place and a history of association with that place” (p.3). This nineteenth century impetus to generate national and epistemological unity, situated history either in the *Volksgeist* or placed it within the body. Such a move ensured not only that natural phenomena were slotted into physical mechanisms as part of a continuum, but also shored up religious theories regarding destiny and immortality.

<sup>6</sup> Otis' blind spot, like Freud's, is how organic memory theory, as well as restating racist determinism, promulgates a specific and damaging view of women. Jill Astbury (1996) provides valuable discussion of this. Astbury asserts that the new scientific age brought changes in legitimisation for the control of women. “There was an interlocking network of scientific authority in which each branch of misogynist science, in a self-referential manner, invoked and confirmed the authority of all other branches and amassed a huge weight of scientific opinion in the process” (Astbury 1996: 62). She cites Freud's texts of 1915-16 and 1919 as examples of his belief in and iteration of the “recapitulation theory” upon which his entire theory of psychosocial development depended. She argues that women were associated with children and those from the ‘lower races’, “and Freud does not depart conspicuously from this position.” Indeed, according to Astbury, Freud echoed anthropologists who stressed that women occupied a lower position than men on the ‘phyletic scale’ because of their biology, and authorised “positivist and universal laws, including the notion of the Oedipus complex, to establish this” (Astbury 1996: 72).

<sup>7</sup> They include familiar stereotypes based on sexual difference such as a marriage broker, a ‘pretty girl wronged’, a ‘virtuous daughter’, a ‘beggar’, the ‘pregnant Baroness’, or women being offered by the marriage-broker despite being variously deformed, deaf or disabled.

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<sup>8</sup> Enterline claims that there is a striking similarity between the hierarchical representations of sexual difference between early modern and psychoanalytic texts.

The reader will encounter a predictable array of “women” as melancholy literary subjectivity defines itself negatively (but nevertheless effectively) by what it lacks, by what it has lost, and by what it claims it is not... These portraits, moreover, consistently represent women and their sexual behaviour through the exceedingly limited lens of what it means for a woman to be a mother (Enterline 1995: 26).

<sup>9</sup> Kristeva exposes a dominant contradiction in Freud’s life and works between the “countless statuettes representing mother goddesses” he collected and the dearth of representations of “real” mothers who are nowhere evident in the lives of his patients and their problems. According to Kristeva, Freud tells us nothing about motherhood except that the desire for a child is “a transformation of either penis envy or anal drive, and this allows her to discover the neurotic equation child-penis-faeces ” (1986: 178-9). In the face of the intricacies of maternity “Freud offers only a massive nothing...a whole mute story” (p.179).

<sup>10</sup> Post-Freudian schools of psycho-scientific discourse such as ego-psychology, object relations theory, humanist and behaviourist psycho-scientific discourse counter the Freudian unconscious by placing the concept of ego as a ‘self’ at the centre of psychodynamic thinking. These also characterise women in fixed gender roles. A good example is psychologist Eric Eriksson’s (1951) text that talks about the psychosomatic disturbance and moral self-accusation of the man who abandoned his mother because he was in such a hurry to become independent.

[T]he stray men on the expanding frontier who faced new geographic and technological worlds as men and without a past...developed to its very emotional and societal limits the image of the man without roots, the motherless man, the womanless man...their common denominator is the freeborn child who becomes an emancipated adolescent and a man who refutes his father’s conscience and his nostalgia for his mother, bowing only to cruel facts and to fraternal discipline (Erikson 1951: 270-1).

## PART THREE

### CHAPTER SEVEN: NEW ZEALAND NOSTALGIAS

Although also concerned with the construction of nostalgia in the wider western context, this project focuses most directly on women's nostalgia in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand. Thus far, I have argued that nostalgia was discredited throughout modernity at least partly because of the threat that longings for the past presented to the socio-cultural and economic dynamics of western progress and presence.

Here this thread of argumentation is extended before analysing the New Zealand research participants' narratives. I initially consider representations of nostalgia in historical New Zealand texts, followed by texts constituting nostalgia for New Zealand in the 1940s, then the 1950s and 60s the era characterising the nostalgias of post-war baby-boomers. Then there is some discussion of the changes occurring in this country over the last twenty years. This provides the context for a wider encounter with a range of Maori, feminist and immigrant nostalgias, most of which have sprung up throughout this period. The final sections concern *The Nostalgia Industry*, with examples of the late-capitalist commodified nostalgias that now pervade this – as every other – country.

#### Section One: Little Deaths, Little Births

It could be claimed that New Zealand is a perfect environment for nostalgia. As James Belich (1996) argues, any form of human existence on these two South Pacific islands inevitably meant that oceans needed to be traversed and homes left behind. Belich

evokes the transhistorical wailing that might have occurred in Hawaiki, Dalmatia and England accompanying such “great uprooting, little death and little birth, ...one of the few things shared by all New Zealand families” (p.337). In this he alludes not only to European immigration but also to Maori memories of the canoes that came here from Hawaiki the mythical island home of Maori, incorporated orally within Maori *whakapapa* (genealogy).<sup>1</sup> As for Europeans, immigrants surged into New Zealand throughout the eighteen hundreds, as did their own notions of selfhood, history, theology and mythology, representing the epistemologies and ontologies of specific European pasts. In this context nostalgia was compromised partly because it was backward looking when the dynamics of Western progress and presence demanded that one looked forward. The New Zealand historian J.C. Beaglehole (1955) provides a good example of how the eighteenth century merging of commerce and science was threatened by nostalgia. The account below cites the medical form of the inconvenient longing for home (surely an anti-exploratory impulse) mentioned in the scientific journals of botanist Joseph Banks who accompanied James Cook’s expedition to New Zealand in 1769. Banks’ journal entry states:

The greatest part of them [sc. the ship’s company] were now pretty far gone with the longing for home which the Physicians have gone so far as to esteem a disease under the name of Nostalgia (Beaglehole: 1955: 409).

So from the earliest days of colonisation, national and regional newspapers, journals, diaries and private letters contemplated issues connected with the immigrant status of this population which included loss, change and yearning for one’s country of origin.

However, and despite the evidence of personal writing such modern historical texts kept a tight rein on the dissemination of knowledges explaining how the various peoples who came to inhabit New Zealand relate to the past. I have referred earlier to the linearity and univocality of historical text; as Ankersmit argues (1994), modern

historical writing offers a textual representation of historical reality, which mediates the relationship between 'real' occurrences of the past and their representation. In Ankersmit's terms, the historicist defines the historical form or idea of a people or nation in terms of "its differences with what was an earlier or later phase" (p.186).

Keith Sinclair (1988) and Alan Grey (1994) are Pakeha historians who are engaged themselves in determining ideas about history. They look closely at what is different about Maori culture in comparison with the European model. They also offer European accounts of nostalgic Maori memories of Hawaiki. Sinclair (1988) discusses the Treaty of Waitangi, (signed on the sixth of February 1840) as a moment intended to lay the basis for a just society in which two races, far apart in civilisation, could live together in amity (p.73). Sinclair's description of the events surrounding the signing of the Treaty makes reference to Maori nostalgia as "several hundred Maoris gathered at Waitangi" (p.70).

Many powerful chiefs longed to return to the golden Polynesian age before white sails had divided their unchanging horizons. They had no need, they argued, for blankets or bread; flax-matting and fern-root satisfied their ancestors. Furthermore, they were afraid that if the Governor stayed, chiefly dignity would be overthrown and they would be as low as worms (Sinclair 1988: 70).

Grey (1994) explains the negation of Maori values in terms revealing the specific Maori relationship to the past that accompanied Maori explanations of history and identity. We are told that the land was heritage for "the Maori people", an integral part of their history and identity: "Enjoying its usufruct under an elaborate set of private and community rights, the land was their image of themselves, their life in both an individual and corporate sense...[and] a tangible reminder of the past to individual and hapu" (p. 161).

These modern authoritative texts categorise Maori in binary terms, where the linear and coherent accounts of an historical past regulate people in terms of the



history spread before their eyes, and select the model that is most appropriate and helpful from the many presented there” (p. 70).

This view of the past is intimately linked to a Maori person’s definition within the communal framework of his or her own particular *iwi* (tribe), *hapu* (sub tribe), and *whanau* (family) and includes the *tupuna* (ancestors) and *uri* (descendants). Their *whakapapa* (genealogy) links the individual to their *tupuna* in the ultimate expression of kinship. Knowledge in tribal traditions of learning is tied to relationships and names, echoing the proverbial concept *nga tipuna ki mua, ko tatou kei muri*, meaning that the ancestors are in front, and we are behind.

These traditional knowledges were increasingly exposed to westernisation in the period around World War Two. In the 1940s under the first Labour Government, assimilationist policies regarding Maori were reshaped to regulate a form of liberal welfare reformism. In 1946 the department of Native Affairs absorbed and homogenised Maori tribal interests and there was a strong rural exodus as Maori moved to the larger towns and cities seeking work. The Maori ‘Other’ of colonial discourse became the liberal psychoscientific ‘other’. Witi Ihimaera (1998) pinpoints the changes this movement stimulated:

Already stripped of political and economic power, and a minority in a country in which they were *tangata whenua*, [the indigenous inhabitants] Maori also began to be driven by economics from their rural hearths to settle among pakeha.... The post-war years accelerated this great rural to urban drift and the accompanying discontinuity in transmission of Maori family histories and culture across time and space. By the 1950s, at least fifty per cent of Maori lived in urban areas (Ihimaera 1998: 13).

## Settler Nostalgia

Sinclair (1988: 57-69) explains how for European settlers in New Zealand, colonisation subsumed forms of Arcadian mythology (or the notion of plenty) even while humanitarianism and imperialism commodified the Utopic nature of European settlement. According to Belich (1996), progress after 1840 generated social stability for European settlers but also meant (shades of Freud) “the displacement of the familiar” in terms of the European home left behind (p.293). For most settlers ‘home’ meant Britain and, according to Claudia Bell (1996), for most settlers, progress meant developing a new land as “an antipodean version of the old one” (p. 36).<sup>2</sup> She describes how permissible nostalgia meant nostalgia authorised hegemonically: “Imported ideas of what constituted a history drew from British tradition, and included nostalgia that mediated visions of the nature left behind: the carefully cultivated fields of a civilised nation” (p. 36).

History also represents a particular kind of gendered nostalgia when the colonial landscape is commandeered by an itinerant and isolated male labour force, or what Jock Phillips (1987) calls (after John Mulgan’s novel) the “man alone”. Lawrence Jones (1990) points out that the *man alone* was the one with the nostalgic vision “transforming wild New Zealand into a pastoral paradise” (p.298). This man eventually could only exist in the wilderness with his pioneer woman. Part of the rhetoric for women’s assisted passage to New Zealand in the 1860s was that women represented a civilised form of humanity: “Women’s natural purity counteracted the barbarism and animal desires of frontier men” (Phillips 1987: 51).

European immigrants were inevitably valued according to their resonance with a specifically masculine construct. As Bell explains, “[t]he New Zealander was not

defined by intellectual, or by spiritual or political characteristics, but by the physical and the masculine: man against the elements, man transforming nature into nation” (p.37). In the background, women’s lives were marked by the Christian ideology of sacrifice, sentiment and maternal compassion braided with compulsory heterosexuality. It follows that pioneer women were mythologised as “wonderful improvisers and providers who...never let the standards of British civilisation drop” (Ofner 1993: 62).

On one hand historical accounts reiterate the European homesickness of sailors and of European settler immigrants for their homelands of origin. On the other hand, there are European accounts of nostalgic Maori memories of Hawaiki or pre-European ‘golden days’. Read in Baudrillardian terms, just as the memories of unhappy experiences in past European cultures that had led to emigration were obliterated by western institutions, the objectivity of historical accounts of this period successfully generate Maori as ‘other’ to the European ‘self’, while repressing Maori Otherness. These historical texts delineate the struggle between the industrial, scientific, institutional and economic customs of Western progress where wealth is accumulated, and the profoundly symbolic, quintessentially circulatory, Maori realm of reciprocity and obligation, challenge and the gift.<sup>3</sup>

## **The Golden Weather**

Other literature reflects the nostalgia of New Zealanders for the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The Depression and war of the 1930s and early 1940s was followed by a post-war era introducing American forms of consumerism alongside nuclear technology and the psychosciences. It was also a time when colonial interests regulated the influx of

immigration and the white face of New Zealand was bolstered by immigration policies ensuring that most immigrants before the 1960s were British. The economic necessity of importing labour, especially professionals, preserved hegemonic interests “by the continuation of very narrowly defined, in racial and ethnic terms, exclusivity” (Pearson 1991: 206).

Accompanied by a discourse of psychological subjectivity, consumerism increasingly pervaded New Zealand culture, ensuring that nostalgias were regulated as distinctively psychoscientific, individualistic and consumerist. As my reading of Lowenthal and Freud indicates, vocabularies of psychoanalysis, psychiatry and psychology link nostalgia to an individual’s identity, while explaining how to understand psychologically-specific internal feelings such as yearning, desire, loss and change.<sup>4</sup> Those immigrants who had some training in the psychosciences worked in New Zealand as teachers, advisers in government, in the sciences, universities and training institutions, and were primarily white and male.

Authorising this professional discourse were experts in Rose’s sense, they trained and credentialed Professionals, persons claiming special proficiency in the management of individuals and relationships, with a body of techniques claiming to make possible the rational management of human resources in industry, education, the military and social life more generally (Rose 1996: 11).

Modern historical text reflects New Zealand in the 1950s as ensconced in a golden age, or paradise. Here the nation as a whole enjoys a benign period of golden weather in God’s own country, or *Godzone*, an epigrammatic neologism for New Zealand from Thomas Bracken’s patriotic poem of the 1870s, “God’s Own Country”. New Zealand followed the American-led move of most western countries into a consumer society, and the notion of Britain as Home was gradually replaced by new

state house paradises in urban New Zealand. According to Miles Fairburn (1975) the 1935 Labour government secured the colonial role of constructing the new-homeland as a modern, egalitarian and democratic state.

Like the family farm, the state house was, in its initial conception, an affirmation of the New Zealand moral vision...Rejecting city culture, it strove to create a family centred Garden of Eden for the city worker" (Fairburn 1975: 15).

Hamish Keith's *A Lovely Day Tomorrow* (1991) describes how "the productive quarter-acre paradise was an essential New Zealand dream of the 1940s" (p.34). The summers seemed to last forever. Such golden days were subsequently enhanced by a wool boom generated by the Korean War in the 1950s which established "over twenty years of prosperity continuing into the early nineteen seventies" (p. 288). The post-war paradise was also conservatively egalitarian, and, ignoring the Maori minority,<sup>5</sup> hand-in-glove with political economy stressing prosperity and homogeneity. These 1950s were conformist, insular, unimaginative and paranoid all in order, we are told, to facilitate security after the Depression and World War Two. Barry Gustafson's discussion of National party domination between 1949 and 1972 reiterates that this secure reality was concerned with men who had been overseas and were now returning and rebuilding homes.

Those governments and prime ministers embodied and articulated the concern for normalcy, security, prosperity and comfort which pervaded New Zealand society throughout the 1950s and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the 1960s.... Soldiers returning from overseas and wives who had been in effect solo mothers during the war years longed to be reunited with loved ones and rebuild their family lives. Some men, of course, found it difficult to fit back into civilian life and some women found it just as difficult to leave the workplace and become housewives again, but in the late 1940s and early 1950s they were the exceptions (Gustafson 1997: 267).

The terms "normalcy", "security", "prosperity" and "comfort", constitute New Zealand as a comfortably natural entity, while the exceptions denote the maintenance

of rigidly heteronormative gender categories constituting the Eurocentric and transcendental ego of the individualised masculine subject.<sup>6</sup> As Michael King (1985) says, gender roles were acutely differentiated: “Girls were girls and men were men...and each sex was allocated a set of predetermined roles” (King 1985: 2). It was also an era when New Zealand was a fiercely Protestant Christian country.<sup>7</sup>

## Ending the Golden Weather

In keeping with the construction of subjects as selves and consumers, the epistemologies and ontologies governing post-war New Zealand novels, poetry and dramatic text up until the 1980s predominantly reflect reality and identifications according to an ethic of autonomous masculine self-hood and psychological individuality. Such essentialist understandings of language and identity fix notions of free choice and autonomy within liberal discourse.<sup>8</sup> Until the 1980s, the hegemony of liberal humanist discourses, on subjectivity, language and culture, construct a national New Zealand literature strongly defined by a Eurocentric and phallocentric middle-class literary elite.

The texts of male New Zealand poets, dramatists, short storywriters and novelists writing in the 1960s most commonly reflect their nostalgia for the 1940s and 50s in the words and phrases reiterating longing for the past events and landscapes of childhood. Chris Jenks (1996) explains that the concept of the child within commonsense and professional psycho-scientific discourse is employed as a device to advance forms of sociality and social cohesion.

The type of growth metaphors that are readily adopted in discussions about childhood all pertain to the character of what is to be and yet which is also presupposed. Thus childhood is spoken about as a ‘becoming’; as a *tabula rasa*; as laying down the foundations; as shaping the individual; taking on; growing up; preparation; inadequacy; inexperience; immaturity, and so on. This adult world is not only

assumed to be complete, recognisable and in stasis, but also, and perhaps most significantly, desirable (Jenks 1996: 9).

Nostalgias for childhood are usually within a chronologically and sequentially ordered, often autobiographical text. Predominant examples of these white New Zealand childhoods in a fictionalised form reflect nature and long hot summers and freedom, in ways that contribute to the formation of the adult self. Two influential texts in this model include James Courage's *The Young Have Secrets* (1954) and Ian Cross' *The God Boy* (1957).

Bruce Mason's play *The End of the Golden Weather* (1962) is the quintessential nostalgic text reflecting the New Zealand experience of childhood in the 1930s. As the cover in the 1994 publication describes, between 1959 and 1978, Mason's play *The End of the Golden Weather* was performed nearly a thousand times in theatres, church halls and community halls throughout New Zealand. According to Mason, the theme of this play is based on American Thomas Wolfe's novel *The Web and the Rock*, and comprises,

a boy's version of his life over a ten-month period, between his twelfth and thirteenth year...[describing] the change from the enchanted light and weather of his soul ...[A]nd how for the first time he becomes aware of the thousand changing visages of time, touched by confusion and bewilderment, menaced by terrible depths and enigmas of experience he had never known before (Mason 1962: 12-13).

The setting is a landscape, "my heritage, my world" (p.32), of beach, sea and pohutukawa trees, the utopia of a "land of milk and honey" turned to "bread and dripping" in the Depression, and the boy's confrontation with Firpo the "wierdie". In this text, nostalgia is the threshold regulating a man's adult longing for the freedom of his boyhood. According to Mason, the *Golden Weather* was "the receding landscape of childhood...pure and shining" (p.49), while "[a]head, the multi-coloured adult world, Man's Own County, studded with grim effigies marked Greed, Authority,

Pride and Law – armour to be assumed for adult occasions” (p.49). The New Zealand boy emerged as middle-class New Zealand became centred on industrial capitalism and boys had to leave home to become middle-class, self-controlled men. Codification prepared the ideological ground for contemporary consumerist and therapeutic culture both in discourses of boyhood which dichotomise the genders and in the presupposition that the preparation of the boy shaped the destiny of the man. This young/old dichotomy assumes that childhood survives as a singular emotional domain within adult experiences of gender.

## Female Nostalgia

Three New Zealand texts by women who write in the 1980s and early 1990s, about nostalgia for their childhood in the 1930s, include Barbara Anderson’s *Predicament* (1974), Janet Frame’s *To the Is-Land* (1982), and Ruth Park’s *A Fence Around the Cuckoo* (1992). This section provides a reading of nostalgia in *To the Is-Land*.

While nostalgia in Frame’s autobiographical text *To the Is-Land* tells us about the New Zealand landscape of her childhood, it also reflects the discourse of nineteenth century British romanticism. Frame’s nostalgia for the 1930s is in memories of her girl-childhood where “I”, by “myself”, discover “my place” (p.25). This discovery of the landscape is a “new kind of possession quite different from my beastie dress or the new baby Isabel” (p.26). Frame differentiates between the feminine world of babies and the freedom, autonomy and selfhood found outdoors. Her nostalgic place is constituted in nature, the outside and the sky:

I remember my special feelings for the sky, its faraway aboveness, up there where my mother and father lived, and the way I was filled with longing for it, a kind of nostalgia shared by my brother and sisters some years later when we discovered an old schoolbook with a poem that began:

On his back in the meadow the little boy lay



with his face turned up to the sky  
 And he watched the clouds as one by one  
 they lazily floated by...(Frame 1985: 26).

The binary earth/sky is echoed in recitation of this poem about a “little boy” watching the clouds float by, which is “shared” with siblings, with each child “feeling the same homesickness and longing for the sky” (p.26). The poem arouses nostalgia in the children, a longing for “the sky” or the world of adulthood that they might aspire to.

Frame’s nostalgia here is authorised with identification with the nascent masculine world of the “little boy”, a realm including the binaries clouds/meadow above/below. ‘Nature’, in terms of trees, creek, log, branches, the sky and sunlight, is dominant in opposition to the social world of language, family and community:

Exploring by myself, I found a secret place among old, fallen trees by a tiny creek, with a moss-covered log to sit on while the new-leaved branches of the silver birch tree formed a roof shutting out the sky except for the patterned holes of sunlight (Frame 1982: 25).

Frame’s text constructs the “secret place” of her girlhood home in nature, utilising theological, romantic and existential discourse to affirm a paradise from which the adult world of materialism, gender roles and capitalism is excluded. In the wider context of the whole autobiographical text, Frame text manages the freedom, innocence and joy of the symbolic childhood places and experiences by rationalising the loss of these paradisaical attributes within the developmental paradigm regulating her emergence into adulthood.

One might see these post-war literary nostalgias as explaining away loss and the painful reality of the yearnings for a remembered paradise sustained by specific subjectivities. They structure yearnings for the paradise of childhood by placing the past in differential relation to the dominant political and economic ideologies of the adult present. The texts are instrumental in organising knowledges in ways that stress

forms of New Zealand identity, and the unity and cohesion of the nation, people and communities of Pakeha New Zealand. At the centre of this nostalgic reality is the individualised and autonomous, Eurocentric and masculine transcendental ego. In Section Two, we consider how the changes that have transformed New Zealand over the last twenty years have also transformed nostalgia.

## **Section Two: Reviving the Golden Weather**

Like other western countries over the last twenty years, Aotearoa/New Zealand has experienced extreme cultural, economic and ideological change. In particular the nation became a signatory to global declarations liberalising international trade and eliminating trade barriers, which has led to the development of global markets facilitated by increased communications technology. In the late 1980s and 1990s, economic libertarianism supporting the free play of market forces came into being generating an understanding that they represented value and growth. From the middle of the 1980s to the late 1990s, New Zealand policy makers reiterated that social progress was dependent upon economic growth, prosperity, expansion and recovery. In spite of its impact on people, communities or the environment, the demand for efficiency claimed that social problems would ameliorate when New Zealand increased production.

Critics of this view however argue that globalisation, communications technology, economic growth and competitiveness increasingly situate Aotearoa/New Zealanders amidst a social, ecological and psychic environment that is distressingly transformed, compounding the alienation, apathy and withdrawal of people, families and communities of the poor and disaffected. The commentator Jane

Kelsey (1999) points out that this formerly isolated Pacific Island is now connected to the wider world in terms of eating styles, movies, television and video, sport, automatic teller machines, the commodification of sports teams, airtravel, cheap imports and connections to the Internet. Local telecommunications, transport, radio and television, banks, land and forests are now owned by “faceless” transnational corporations (p.3).

The ‘national interest’ has been redefined to mean making business more competitive in the international market place. For people with money all this can be liberating. For many ordinary New Zealanders it represents a threat to identity, jobs, communities, and the right to control their own lives (Kelsey 1999: 3).

Kelsey reflects the debate over unsustainable social costs engendered by free market theories, including how pro-active government policies have shattered urban and rural communities with no regard for the effects on people’s lives.

The urban poor – Maori and Pacific islands people, the elderly, women alone, single parents, young unemployed, working class families, new immigrants, the mentally ill, among others – were trapped in enclaves of unemployment, homelessness and poverty (Kelsey 1999: 368).

The social costs of these kinds of changes are reflected in statistics themselves demonstrating the methodological individualism of the survey in keeping with the methods of contemporary psycho-sociological sciences. Such statistical knowledges seek to manage unwieldy social and environmental problems: most of the statistics represent those who are increasingly dispossessed, alienated and made redundant. Kelsey describes New Zealand as now clearly polarised along lines of race, gender, age and economic class. She cites one in five New Zealanders and one-third of the country’s children as living in poverty, more than twice as many as in 1988. In 1999, “Maori families were two and a half times (and Pacific Islands families three and a half times) more likely to live in poverty than Pakeha families” (p.368). Other texts disseminated by the New Zealand Government highlight the ‘gains’ in Maori

women's lifestyles at the same time as providing data that reflects the continuing ways in which being a Maori woman means being constituted in 'loss'.<sup>9</sup>

Narratives of socio-psychical impoverishment, alienation, illness and anxiety surround the political economy and provide a backdrop against which nostalgia is now experienced. These narratives inevitably position the individual amidst the corporate, consumerist, "identity mania" that constitutes what Baudrillard calls "neo-individualism" (Baudrillard 1996: 104). All the while, various agencies of the socio-psychologies urge people to be 'free-choosing', autonomous, happy and fulfilled, in accord with consumerist liberal democracies.

Discourses representing the environs of present-day New Zealand as unsafe and threatening have come into being to compete with those of the past, which seemed benevolent. It might be argued that when the present is represented as being in a "critical condition" (Morgan 1996), it has the effect of dichotomising time and heightening the compassionate and benign quality of social conditions of the past. In an unusually hopeful statement, Kelsey goes back nostalgically to the lessons of the Great Depression, arguing that

once people believe that collectively they can influence the major decisions and can shift the political will, it is a small step to believing that greater change is possible....The state of the future still rests largely in our hands (Kelsey 1999: 385).

Since November 1999 a new social democratic Labour Government has been committed to recognising how fifteen years of globalisation and social reforms have constructed a social disaster rather than unbridled economic gain. The treasury term 'social cohesion' counters the concept that private sector solutions are better than public administration, right-wing economic theory and market-based philosophy. As Bruce Ansley points out, "the Treasury is reinventing people of human dimensions other than mere consumers and tax payers...putting heart back into a dispirited

population” (Listener 2000: 16). Ansley is sceptical however about whether real social equity is possible while the government stays within the same economic direction (p.19). In Aotearoa/New Zealand today it is impossible to separate global economics and the computer technology that is hourly becoming entrenched. Multi-party politics are broadcast in media-bites with little discernible difference between the general policies of each party. Cries for the putative ‘social cohesion’ existing in the 1950s and recent policies determined to ‘close the gap’ between Maori and Pakeha are greeted with cynicism and indifference.

If one reads enthusiastic attempts at self-determination and nostalgic attempts to revive the social in Baudrillardian terms, however, one must focus upon the context of transnational markets and consumerist technologies in which such nostalgic discourse now exists. Baudrillard describes exactly how there is now “a frenzied proliferation of signs of the real and of ‘difference’: ‘reality’ and ‘difference’” (Baudrillard 1981: 86). In other words, in New Zealand, like other Western states, models of consumption, production, progress and development prolifically hyperrealise reality in their own image.

The next section traces some of the ontological changes that have overwhelmed this nation. I first investigate how the diversity of nostalgic realities and differences overflows in a kind of textual profusion that belies the actual homogeneity, or reduction of diversity, characterising the present global economy.

## Hyperreal New Zealand

In this section it is argued that the traditional New Zealand experience of remaking European reality so that it was meaningful to Antipodeans has been transformed by the hyperreal nature of mass consumer society and technoscientific change. Technological developments in the mediation of reality have now affected perceptions of time and space so profoundly that as Paul Virilio claims, there is no longer the ability to appreciate how the real has been altered (1993: 55). Late-modernity has swept away a singularity of forms and produces 'reality' from the models or codes of the mass media, political processes, genetics and digital technology. Now, illusion has become a form that complicates the relation between truth and reality, not only exhausting our faith in reality but also generating indifference, distance and scepticism. Does the world as image and virtual reality also deaden memory and imagination? Might an emotion such as nostalgia that is now absorbed by the televisual be best understood as an illusion of 'real' nostalgia that is judged by its proximity to the code or model of nostalgia rather than in metaphysical or humanist terms? It can be claimed that such nostalgia is no longer governed by the linear coherences of historical or literary text, the physiological or the social, but now, like other aspects of 'hyper'culture, must be understood as facilitating a pragmatic and commodified function.

The following sections explore how nostalgia now constitutes a space where 'real' nostalgia and its illusory representational forms are indistinguishable. Although nostalgia is no longer really managed by theology, psychoanalysis, nationalism, cultural difference or other discourses of modernity these obsolete forms are frantically reiterated to furnish the illusion that it is 'business as usual'. This very

frenzy is part of what drives post-industrial requirements. What follows are accounts echoing the diversity and multiplicity of these postmodern New Zealand nostalgias.

## Feminist Nostalgias

Liberation is a very personal thing. It begins when *you* change *your* attitudes. It requires each of us to make an *individual transformation*.... [I]t is only when we join together that we will bring about changes to enable liberation to be a lifestyle rather than a mere ideal (Kedgley and Cederman 1972: 117).

Feminist discourse was introduced to New Zealand in the 1970s, and the complicity that discourse shares with liberal humanism and psychotherapy is evident in one of the first feminist texts written here. In *Sexist Society* (1972) Susan Kedgley and Sharyn Cederman insist that the aims of “Women’s Liberation” concern not just removing discrimination, gaining equal pay and child care, changing abortion laws, or acquiring free contraception: “The real liberation takes place inside yourself” (p.7). This quotation reveals the self-conscious self-scrutiny of newly politicised young women attempting to be ‘liberated’ from the suburban neurosis and domesticity that appeared to blight the lives of our mother’s generation.

To gain a wider feminist perspective on this phenomenon, Sue Middleton (1993) describes how *our mothers’* domesticity was regulated by hegemonic psychological and medical discourses necessary for the rehabilitation of returned soldiers.

Before and during the war, there had been a concern about a falling population. The postwar wife and mother could ensure a growing population of stable, well-adjusted children. Women who did not conform to such maternal images were seen as deviant, neurotic, or disturbed; as likely to produce delinquent children; and as in need of the curative powers of medical science...these ideas remained in the educational policies of the 1950s and 1960s...Girls would be prepared for marriage and motherhood (Middleton 1993: 52).

Middleton points out that when baby boomers went to school in the 1950s, female education was gendered and sexuality was medicalised and placed within the realm of “scientific reason” by being represented only in General Science textbooks (p.52). Education as a whole was perceived to be a means of socialising or governing the population, linked to what Middleton calls the rise of functionalism and “technocratic rationality” within the sociology of education (p.51). As early feminist critiques of sociological practices (Oakley 1974, Smith 1974) argue, the functionalist and technocratic discourses dominating education were androcentric.

Our girlhood education and sexual experiences were structured by the sociological theories that were later to become the object of our adult feminist critiques. We were constituted by what we were studying (Middleton 1993: 56).

Middleton contends that postwar education policies were influenced by progressive models of society “as a means of developing in individuals the kinds of rationality that would form a sound basis for democracy and for preventing the resurgence of fascism” (p.51). Education is a dominant means through which hegemonic and heteronormative gendering is authorised and regulated.

Sandra Coney is an authoritative ‘baby booming’ voice in feminist literature. In *Out of the Frying Pan*, (1990) Coney generates a past world of a childhood of feminist identity. The past is constituted by key words and phrases which structure memories of the past: *my earliest childhood memory, in those days, this was a period when, an old family scrapbook, I remember, it is long ago, my mother remembers*. In this way the text structures comparisons between then and now. In accord with Simone de Beauvoir’s critique of “the complicity of the woman who accepts male dominance and her oppressed status” (p.14), the text is dominated by markers of gender difference which constituted childhood. The binary oppositions between male culture and a feminist who used to be an atypical child, include: “My sister and I were



largely brought up as boys...we experienced what it was like to be a boy in New Zealand, rather than a girl" (p.13).

The nostalgia here reiterates an individual's origins and generational gender differences and markers, dominated by the terms: *father's father, grandmother, wife's mother, my father's ideal type* (p.16). As well as gender and family history, meanings are organised around the disparity between the community she belonged to, the 'insiders, and those who were not local to Piha in the summer or the 'outsiders'; as well as masculine culture *then*, and feminist knowing *now* as evinced by the phrase "I have since come to see" (p.152).

In a later text *Into the Fire* (1997), Coney provides an ironic reading of pre-feminist, masculine Kiwi culture where "Mum" was the moral arbiter. It is a world that Coney, like other feminists of the 1970s, had grown up in, yet was now distanced from because of her feminist understandings:

New Zealand used to be a corker little country, a real cracker, a real home away from home...and then some! Where else in the world could you just hack down a bit of bush, throw up a bach in the weekend and sit with your feet up while the fish threw themselves at your set line...I haven't even mentioned cracking open a keg, haven't mentioned it at all (I won't because Mum's reading this over me shoulder)...The place was Godzone. It was blooming paradise (Coney 1997: 32).

This text echoes mythological Golden Age literature where there is a paradise ("cracker", "corker", home away from home" blooming paradise") which is in the past ("used to be", "was"). This paradise is constituted in "New Zealand", "Godzone" and is a place with shelter, an abundance of food and drink and leisure. This "home away from home" for the 'man alone' is differentiated from the present day where a wife regulates freedom ("Mum's reading this over me shoulder"). Coney's feminist sensibility structures her own distancing-by-critique of this egocentric masculine world.

## Modern Maori Nostalgias

A Maori renaissance in the 1970s transformed literary, political and artistic expressions and assertions of Maori culture. In the 1980s New Zealand politics also reinvigorated the Treaty of Waitangi as the legal document underpinning Maori land claims within the auspices of an egalitarian, liberatory postmodern cultural shift. Biculturalism became institutionalised. This meant asserting historical processes of categorisation which stressed the links between nationalism and the binary logic of imperialism, reiterating specific ‘postcolonial’ Pakeha/Maori relations of alterity.<sup>10</sup> It also meant attempts to neutralise the impact of this reassertion through a liberal discourse of human rights and liberation for the Maori individual.

In this context Maori novelists Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace wrote about the lost world of Maori values. On radio and in the theatre and on television, Maori artists, writers, filmmakers, playwrights and craftspeople began to generate Maori nostalgias, specifically concerning the reality of a past/pre-contact Maori world in contrast to western values. In Keri Hulme’s *The Bone People* (1984) a *kaumatua* claims: “this will remain a land where the spirit has withdrawn. Where the spirit is still with the land but is no longer active. No longer loving the land...I can’t imagine it loving the mess the pakeha have made can you?” (p. 371).

Maori texts everywhere highlight traditional Maori values experienced alongside the tensions and traumas of assimilationist policies. Grace’s novel *Cousins* (1992) narrates the sense of disbelief that might accompany the loss of the Maori language “in its own homeland”:

How could that be? And this state of affairs regarding our language, seemed to epitomise all that had happened with our land, our lives and our culture – having to ask, having to fight to retain what was our own and that belonged nowhere else in the world but here (Grace 1992: 210).

Symbolic community life is reiterated in Grace's text *Potiki* (1986), where one of the several narrators point out: "We were busy with our gardens and our nets, and busy learning all that could be learned about the land" (p. 107). Like Hulme and Grace, Ihimaera's *Pounamu, Pounamu* (1972), *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977), *Kingfisher Come Home* (1995) and *The Matriarch* (1986) also catalogue nostalgia for Maori losses sustained in the 1950s and 1960s. This literature marks the shift by Maori from rural environments distinguished by Maori forms of symbolic exchange to increasingly consumerist driven urban environments.

A sensuous, safe world of Maori girlhood is revealed in *Mana Wahine Maori* (1991) where Te Awekotuku reflects the sensations she experienced in a past community steeped in Maori values: "Raised in many different households, Maori fashion I enjoyed the featherdown soft cuddles of a doting gentle *Kuia* (grandmother), graced by the warm safety of a tribal environment" (p.17).

Deirdre Nehua highlights how important memories of the symbolic Maori realm are within the oppressive world of colonialism. The narrator's memories of the past, of relationality, embodiment, spirituality and sharing, help her endure the pain of having the traditional tattoo, the *moko kaua*, carved onto her chin.

At each cut he makes I go further back to *Motu Kowhai*. My footprints are in the sand. I can never go back there, either in the body or in the spirit, without seeing my darling grandmother, my grandfather, my aunties and uncles as vibrant young people with their lives ahead of them. As I take my voyage into the past, I see granny's sisters, all dressed in black, perched on the island cracking oysters open and eating them....All have helped me endure some of the pains of growing up Maori. They are helping me now as I endure the pain of taking the *moko* (Nehua 1999: 95).

Maori identity within nostalgic literature is framed by dichotomous terms as a paradise of past Maori language and cultural values is compared to the present world where these have been lost or profoundly jeopardised. Nostalgia in these Maori narratives position the Maori *home*, the object that the narrator is *homesick* for, in a

clearly different place from contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand. The past world is reflected in the use of the Maori language and the visualisations and vocabulary of Maori spirituality, community and reciprocity, in a dichotomous relationship with Pakeha values such as individualism and materialism. Present day Maori text draws upon this past symbolic realm of Maori to generate resources, pride and strength. They resurrect a past Maori world under the auspices of the politics of a bi-culturalism that ostensibly seeks the ultimate control of Maori for Maori knowledges and resources. Echoing feminist text, this is rendered in psychoscientific terms reflecting the real (Maori) self who *was* oppressed but now, in keeping with humanist therapeutic discourse, can be “who she really is” (Nehua 1998: 95).

### **Immigrant Nostalgia**

‘Feel thy land!’ says the voice, dark as chocolate snapping. ‘Feel thy land.’ I drop to my haunches, I clumsily pull a stalk of long grass from the summer ground. I put it in my mouth and chew. My mouth tastes of gales, of artesian water, of sun. My mouth tastes the Manawatu for the first time in my life (du Fresne: 1980: 11).

As well as feminist and Maori voices, New Zealand literature in the 1980s and 1990s has increasingly reflected the nostalgias of other immigrants to this country. In the extract from Yvonne du Fresne’s *Farvel* (above) the reality of immigrant life is constituted by an alliance between the mouth and New Zealand identity. The mouth represents the internal knowledge of the realities of life and death or as Cixous puts it something “between an undeniable, unverifiable, presence and absence” (1998: 133). In the following section I consider how immigrant literatures are organised around polarities of presence and absence, past and present, bilingual and multilingual, ethnically the same and ethnically different, immigrant and indigene, reality and fantasy.

Livia K. Wittmann's (1999) reading of postmodern ethnicities in New Zealand literature points to how nostalgic immigrant texts are characterised by the use of terms and vocabularies from the past homeland. Literature by the writers Amelia Bastistich (1963, 1981, 1987, and 1991), Yvonne du Fresne (1980, 1982, 1985, 1986), Sia Figiel (1996) and Kapka Kassabova (1997) all incorporates languages other than English, and Wittmann further distinguishes not only the dichotomous relations of ethnocultural difference/sameness in a monocultural English context, but also how these nostalgias for past homelands reflect the community/individual dichotomy (p.8). She suggests, for example, that changes in Sia Figiel's Pacific Island text signify the gradual shift to "the complexity of individuation" as "[t]he desire to create a constructive interaction between collectivity and individual, between [Samoan] values and their critical challenge, between oppressive gender roles and freedom of choice" (Wittmann 1999: 9).

Amelia Bastistich's texts are particularly distinguished by nostalgia when Croatian words and proverbs and Dalmatian myths characterise "the pain of enforced silence and resulting loneliness as the outcome of living conditions" for one woman alone in the gumfields (p.10). In her short story "The Road Back", the woman sets off on foot to return to Dalmatia "to be part of the living world again", and instead assuages her nostalgia by finding another woman to talk to and listen to, despite the women being unable to understand each other's spoken language. Here, the polarities of presence/absence generate silence and isolation in tension with each other and with the lack of each.

Kapka Kassabova's poems in *All roads lead to the sea* reflect multicultural and multiple voices who are at home and not at home, both "elsewhere" and uneasy amidst "puzzling familiarity" in New Zealand. Jane Stafford (1997) notes that these

poems indicate “an important task for our literary culture, the need to accommodate not just the duality of biculturalism, with its inherent danger of mannered binarism, but the more confused and unformalised multiplicity of a literature of multiculturalism” (p. 5). In these poems, Kassabova structures binaries of home/not home, familiar/unfamiliar, presence/absence, immigrant/indigene, past and present together constitute the identity and difference of the immigrant who “exists by definition as other” at “the end of the world” amidst loss, memories and dreams.

According to Wittmann, ethnic nostalgia is mainly thematised as fantasy, revealed as such when the migrant returns to the former homeland which, by being seen realistically, loses its power to maintain that past identity. In texts generating ethnic nostalgia of this sort, memoried landscapes from the past act to fix a place of belonging which is valorised in relation to the present day New Zealand landscape. Wittmann’s explanation of ethnic nostalgia is a good example of how nostalgia that is regulated according to a postmodern frame of reference utilises the binary of singular/hybrid identity to uphold the disparity between the ‘real’ and ‘illusory’.

Although the diverse nostalgias of Maori, feminist and immigrant texts unsettle the unity of the dominant Eurocentric and phallogentric text, they also provide a multiply generated ethno-cultural, gendered and moral spectrum of discourse which utilises nostalgic yearning for the past as a form of ‘identity’ and resistance. In other words, the binary structuration of differences, regulating both semiotics and exchange, anchors one’s sense of political and personal *ressentiment* in longings for a lost positivised past. Some texts situate this in the childhood of feminist text, with the positivised freedom found in not being gendered female which problematically finds the girl playing like a “boy” (from the generic man). Other texts reiterate the positivised pre-contact, or pre-urban, Maori community. For immigrant

women, the positivised past designating ethnic identity, ‘who one was’ together with the pain of loss, is situated in the surrounds of one’s own, or one’s parents’ “memory landscape”.

In keeping with Baudrillardian social theories, it is maybe more helpful to hear the nostalgic texts of the last twenty years as instrumentalising rather than reconceptualising diverse and multiple, even multicultural, nostalgic subjectivities. Read in this light, nostalgic differences unequivocally echo the greatly changed status of the sign and its connection to reality that Baudrillard argues has recently occurred. In Grace’s words,

[a] collapse, or implosion, of the poles of the sign (signifier/signified precisely registers the loss of the referent (itself a phantasmatic formulation of a previous era, or ‘episteme’ in Foucault’s terms), and institutes the precession of the *model* of reality, and the logic of simulation (Grace 2000: 124).

The novels, poems and short stories by feminist, Maori and immigrant writers can be understood as simulated nostalgic signs, or forms of art, that positivise cultural values of the past. The multiple forms of these discourses reflect an implosion of the poles of nostalgia and constitute the “innumerable particles” regulating the contemporary (yearning, desiring, needing) consumer. As Baudrillard explains, this has little to do with liberty and liberation at all.

This ‘post-modern’ individualism arises not out of a problematic of liberty and liberation, but out of a liberalization of slave networks and circuits, that is, an individual diffraction of the programmed ensembles, a metamorphosis of the macro-structures into innumerable particles (Baudrillard 1994: 107).

Instead of ‘conceptualising’ nostalgia for a past paradisaical home or childhood anew, these writers reflect the differentiation and heterogeneity of contemporary representational practices. Postmodern nostalgias now consist of innumerable particles because both polarities of the binaries generating the master narratives of New Zealand history and identity are now regurgitated in the interests of the global

market. Predicated on the precession of these models of difference, economic exchange in hyperreality generates the simulation of multiple differences. While differences of all sorts disappear in the homogenising confines of globalisation, these very differences assert their importance. As Baudrillard points out, however,

[t]hese earlier forms never resurface as they were; they never escape the density of extreme modernity. Their resurrection is itself hyper-real. These resuscitated values are themselves fluid, unstable, subject to the same fluctuations as fashion of stock-exchange capital...None of the 'retro' scenarios that are being got up has any historical significance: they are occurring wholly on the surface of our age, as though all images were being superimposed one upon another, but with no change to the actual course of the film (Baudrillard 1992: 117).

In accord with this, one may argue that communications, advertising, publishing and the media generate nostalgia to conceal the fact that the epistemologies and ontologies that traditionally marked reality and identity no longer exist. Simulated nostalgias camouflage the fact that there is no longer a linear historical reality with "a logical order of causality and continuity" (Baudrillard 1992: 110). Baudrillard (1990) claims that history itself is now dead and cultural representations are merely examples of how we "root through the dustbins of history, [to] revive both the best and the worst in the vain hope of separating good from evil" (p.117).

In the following accounts, I try to give a sense of how this hyper-realising of fluid, unstable, "resuscitated values" that appear "on the surface of our age", presently generate New Zealand nostalgias that contextualise the interviews analysed in Part Three of the thesis. They include nostalgias from the popular media, talkback radio and the New Zealand Film Archives.



## The Nostalgia Industry

### (1) Strolling Down Memory Lane

I think I'm goin' back  
 To the things that I remember in my youth  
 I think I'm returning to  
 those days when I was young enough to know the truth  
 (Song lyrics: *Goin' Back*. King: Goffin)

Today the past is irrepressibly an ordinary part of our everyday reality. A monthly publication *Memories*, packed with large black and white photographs of different historical periods in New Zealand, advertises photo restoration with the words "Make old relatives look like new". A New Zealand *Historic Places* publication (March 1998) suggests New Zealanders "address the continued devaluing and destruction of our unique historic places" (p.3). 'Historical' recently-made New Zealand films such as *Utu* (1983), *Ngati* (1987), *Starlight Hotel* (1988), *An Angel at My Table* (1990), *The End of the Golden Weather* (1992), *Heavenly Creatures* (1994), *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and *The Piano* (1994) reiterate simulated Maori and Pakeha nostalgias. On national radio there are regular repeats of daily programmes where Maori are asked to recall memories of their past childhood (*Mana Tangata*) and other programmes reiterating Maori language and traditional values (*Rourou* and *Whanau*). A small town, Otorahanga, is going to be turned into a "living breathing museum". A spokeswoman describes how, in order to maximise tourism, the town will expand its programme of breeding kiwis and sell banners, flags and replicas of 1950s' Kiwi icons such as Buzzy bees, Marmite and Pavlova-cake.

Bell (1996) argues that the 1990s' growth industry of efforts to capitalise on traditional nostalgias includes observing that New Zealand 'colonial' has become a distinctive consumer style with the emphasis upon scarce or endangered timbers such as kauri and rimu (p. 165). In Baudrillard's terms, this might seem to acknowledge

that these native trees are already obsolete. In other words, this very phenomenon forms a discourse of conservation where to ‘conserve’ objects from the past (including “those things we value”) in any kind of ‘museum’ is to acknowledge its prior eradication and its re-incarnation as a simulated object of nostalgia and customer fascination.

One might read the flamboyant display of New Zealand’s founding document *The Treaty of Waitangi* at the National Museum Te Papa, in terms of Baudrillard’s theorising, too. The architectural dominance of this assertion of racial and cultural accord means that, despite political and media claims, the apparent agreement between Maori and Pakeha is not that at all. The enormous size of the Te Papa display represents the conservation of a moment of contact between European and Maori cultures, which in British terms substantively grounded British sovereignty over New Zealand. That the Te Papa replication represents only an illusion of giant proportions is enormously problematic, even meaningless, in that the process of westernisation has reduced the plurality of different Maori and Pakeha ways of life to the unity of “the Same”, therefore without the otherness of any irreducible “Other”.

The museum has constructed ‘talking poles’ and other devices that can also be read as strategies to fabricate a synthetic founding memory to simulate values, cultures and differences. But in fact the sheer dominance of this display excites nothing but the grim realisation that racial differences are merely spectral in a country where the western assimilation of the Maori Other is unremitting. In Baudrillard’s words “this is how it happened, it is finished, it will never happen again” (1996: 23). Promoting and displaying our prime national referent generates an illusion of the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi, as does the following Te Papa catalogue that perfectly signals an intellectual ‘postmodern’ proliferation of New Zealand

identities, differences, “histories”, “versions”, and “voices”, that nevertheless merely denotes their demise.

It [Te Papa] offers a place where the environments and cultures of New Zealand are suggested, revealed and debated in all their complexity and diversity; a forum where different cultures are recognised, their myths explored, their treasures and taonga honoured, a place where truth is no longer taken for granted, but is understood to be the sum of many histories, many versions, many voices (Te Papa, the new Museum of New Zealand).

The following examples of popular literature also conserve aspects of New Zealand culture which have already disappeared. As Baudrillard declares:

So many things have been produced and accumulated that they can never possibly all be put to use... So many messages and signals are produced and disseminated that they can never possibly all be read... There is something particularly nauseating about this prodigious uselessness, about a proliferating yet hypertrophied world (Baudrillard 1990: 32).

*North and South* is a glossy monthly New Zealand magazine providing for middle New Zealand, a consumer market which has played a particularly strong role in reconstituting the current proliferation of New Zealand nostalgias. Warwick Roger's article “The Baby Boomers Face 50”, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1996, is a discourse of nostalgia but it also emulates historical text by utilising numbers and dates from the past. In 1945 and 1946, for example “[t]housands of men... their hearts full of home” returned from war; “Our Dads” fathered 47,524 children in 1946; “of the 1.1 million New Zealanders between 1945 and 1961, half the population was under 25”. Then, New Zealand changed from being a farm for the United Kingdom to becoming a market for American culture. Coca Cola and coffee became “fluid new values” and “It was the dawn of the modern age: Our Time” (p.46).

Roger's text reflects an era constituting as its past the depression and the war, in comparison to the security of the 1950s at the flowering of the technological age.

The text ironically emphasises the changes in New Zealand in the last fifty years, echoing the difference between childhood and adulthood, between then and now.

Because they were secure at last, we were secure; hidden away in a rich, temperate, crowded, healthy, stable little country in the vastness of the South Pacific, in the 1950s we were probably the most secure children on the planet (Roger 1996: 46).

At 50 we live in a trusting and querulous multi-ethnic Pacific Rim nation where last year 49,000 immigrants came to live and where only 74% of our population were of 'New Zealand European lineage' (Roger 1996: 53).

Roger goes on to consider the 1960s, 70s and 80s in turn. First revealing how exposure to the modern age of television, commercial jet travel and computers is accompanied by a new discourse of the imaginary: "Bathed in the eerie glow of the cathedra tube and imagining we were young Americans"; "tried drugs - and experienced the joys of sitting about stoned imagining we were in *Easy Rider*" (p.46). There are also "memories" of Vietnam (p.49). The litany of terms moves on to adulthood in New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s which includes the terms *OE*, *Germaine Greer*, *New Men*, *SNAGs*, *Rogernomics*, *Middle Age*, as well as the way we *left spouses*, *took stock*, *sold out in the 80s* and thus entered the *Famous 50s*. Roger concludes by citing several well-known authoritative personalities' summation of the *positive* attributes of being older.

## (2) My Home Town

Other nostalgia is found in *North and South* magazine's co-editor Robyn Langwell's book *My Home Town* (1991) that generated a nostalgia section each month for a period from 1994-96. Similar to Roger's universal appeal to "Our Dads", the foreword to Langwell's text describes the "communal chord that would make readers from north and south feel as one. No matter when and where they grew up in New

Zealand, they were sure to have stored good memories". This text is also organised according to decades: "the 30s depression, the 40s war years, or the burgeoning 50s and 60s, there were always quintessential joys to be had in our green and golden sea-lapped land". Langwell's nostalgia also provides generational markers based upon some auspicious event, and gives experiences, not of drugs and Vietnam, but of the joys of nature regardless of poverty, race, and gender, because all are as one.

In juxtaposition to Roger's text that utilises masculine experiences that might act as markers of time and of the imaginary, eight of the nostalgia columns in *North and South* construct a past world of enchantment and danger in the environment. Descriptive writing about the colours and sensations of a childhood landscape and memory phrases like 'going back' and other ways of talking about time predominate. The summary of one of these texts reflects a hopeful world, in contrast to the great Depression and the Second World War. It is also a feminine world of active girlhood.

In Janette's text (*North and South* 1995: 35-6) nostalgia is a symbolic, magical realm of childhood time and space that is revisited in the final paragraph by Janette as an adult. Janette enters nostalgia by iterating the date, her parents' names and three spatial markers tracing her family's movement from one home to another. But the land itself is what she now longs for: "I longed to climb Pudding Island's yellow cliffs and explore its tangled topknot" (p.36). Like the immigrant women returning to their home and/or countries of origin, Janette's return as an adult to a physically expanded and almost unrecognisable place, introduces a discourse of rational adulthood, despite which "the magic I remember is not far away"(p.36).

### (3) Talkback radio: “Open Country”

Media interests now constitute the hypertrophy of nostalgias on the radio. There are programmes about nostalgia on two different stations, which feature prominently during the weekends. From six until midnight on Friday and Saturday nights, Newstalk ZB broadcasts a programme called *Nostalgia with Jim Sutton*. The programme reviewed here is *Open Country* which goes to air every Saturday and Sunday morning between five and eight a.m. on *Radio Pacific*, the “more stimulating talk radio” (Listener July 2000).

The host of *Open Country*, Phil Warren (who is also the Chairman of the Auckland District Council, where one-third of New Zealand’s population live) introduces the programme after advertisements for *Nature’s Herbal Sunshine Products* and *Car Aid Engine Experts*. This introduction is peppered with key words denoting memorabilia:

Good morning everybody, welcome to the programme of nostalgia that takes you down the byways and highways of memories where you relive the past. Amongst the wide-ranging topics we talked about yesterday were meccano sets, John Hanlon a 1960s singer whose songs are appropriate for today, Thermets, Baby Austins, the old scow Ismay, and the Otago Museum.

Phil takes calls from ten callers during the first hour on Sunday, July 2, 2000. The topics discussed are diverse but construct the binary then and now, where the past (then) constitutes the ‘real thing’ of original items. The first caller, Michael, is 86 years old and remembers the *Agriculture and Pastoral Shows* when ‘authentic’ Maori articles were taken to the show. He describes how the ceremonial battle spear, the *taiaha*, “were genuine, now they are made in bulk”. He continues: “The real thing was made out of *kanuka* [a timber], and the wood was flint-hard. All the originals had dog-skin with the hair left on”.

Ron recalls his days as a junior woodsman at Golden Downs in 1959. “I went to work in a Bedford truck, you learnt how to plant trees. It was the Forest Service in those days”. “Good morning Snow,” says the host. Snow recalls: “I’ll never forget Friday nights when I was a boy – the old boat *Baruna* used to go to Waiheke Island. A lot of people used to travel on it in its younger days”. “Thank you very much Snow” Says Phil. “Good morning Jack, how are you?” Jack replies:

Can I talk a little bit about the early kauri in the Waitakeres? In my recollection, the bulk of kauri was finished in 1925. The first milling of kauri was at Cornwallis in 1842. The biggest kauri I cut was six foot around. The bulk of the kauri went a long time ago.

Then there is a break for advertisements: Ascot TV and home appliances – “we can preserve your memories by dubbing precious film onto video”; Paul Kelly Motor Company; Raywood Orchard; then the call-sign *Radio Pacific – the power of free speech*. After the weather forecast, the continuity announcer says “a good memory is a precious thing”, while background voices sing: “*Let’s take a look behind, and see what we can find, what happened to us then can happen once again*”

“Hello Peg” says Phil. Peg responds:

Just after the last war Maori artefacts were found on the Three Kings Islands. They found a hole under a tree and it turned out to have three carvings, a bird woman and a box kind of thing, a coffin...in it were various pieces, one was a needle made from greenstone. Lots of bones, skeletons and every one of the heads had a hole behind the left ear.

This programme markets memories and nostalgias and attempts to conserve long-lost aspects of New Zealand culture. Memory terms including “I’ll never forget” and “my recollection” structure the “younger days” and conceal the fact that the authentic Maori *taiaha*, the boat *Baruna*, kauri trees, the culture that left Maori artefacts on the Three Kings Islands have already disappeared. Talkback nostalgia is an example of the attempt to revive the “vanished or vanishing forms” which “never resurface as

they were” but are indeed occurring wholly on the surface of our age” (Baudrillard 1990: 117). This form of radio plays a dominant part in the nostalgia industry. As it endlessly dispenses consumerist information and the memories of youth to the elderly, the very pace and fervour of its exchanges remind us that the panic to disseminate nostalgia must be read in terms of the loss of reality this masks.

#### **(4) Tiki Touring: “summer days were happy days spent just having fun”**

The *Tiki Touring* advertising brochure is densely packed with markers of the 1950s in Pakeha New Zealand while the press preview (Appendix 3) is evocative and inviting:

The cloudless, careless, endless summers when you woke to blue skies and the back doorstep already hot from the sun; when the blackberries were always sweeter and the water was always warm. It may be an illusion, but a visit to the New Zealand Film Centre in Cable Street, Wellington makes it easy to believe. Seventy years of glorious summers are there for you to see (Aldridge, 2 January 1999).<sup>11</sup>

In the New Zealand Film Archives Exhibition *Tiki Touring Tipi Haere*, one is immediately confronted by a flotilla of clips from real home movies, newsreels, photographs and advertisements from variously labelled television screens. The categories are *Get-aways*, *Water Sports*, *Refreshments*, *Joy Riders*, *Summer Styles* and *Working Bees*. Each theme, endlessly repeated on its own small television set, resurrects the recognisable presence of the world of 1950s baby-boomers moving amidst water, food, and people in nature (at the beach, in the sea, in the bush). Unknown yet strangely familiar ordinary European nuclear families, bodies and faces are animated once more, as they laugh, squeal, and endlessly pose for the camera.



The sparkling images simulate memories of one's family at play and at home in the New Zealand landscape, while the text makes claims to the land and to nature based on the traditional oppositions of European and Maori. European New Zealand traditions (for the word Pakeha was not yet in common currency) and cultural practices are situated in their home in nature, under blue sky and surrounded by water, either sea, swimming pools, river, ice or hose water.

Differentiated gender roles are also ubiquitous. Laughing girls are shown either standing beside a male, or lying on the sand as part of a row with identical girlfriends. Over and over, girls join in beauty contests, are bridesmaids, and wear frocks, while a voice-over sings "nature enter me". To complete this replication of Godzone there is an abundance of food: ice-blocks, toheroa, ice cream and jelly.

The jittery, amateurish camera work complements the unsynchronised movements of people with awkward, unsophisticated faces that reveal the unscripted performances of those whose reality did not yet include digital technology. Here, my own nostalgia perceives a technology marked by its less complex, less competent, and less fluid technique when juxtaposed with the technical proficiency of the present day. Ironically too, this up to date technology exactly simulates the poor quality colour, or black and white imaging techniques of original childhood snaps and home movies. But while it is indisputable that the profusion of life, laughter, food, and the outdoors in Godzone fleshes out the husks of one's memory, something's wrong. Somehow it is easy to identify with Freud, when "one hot summer afternoon" he gets lost in provincial Italy, and describes "an uncanny feeling, which furthermore, recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some dream state" (1919: 237). Even more than what Freud describes here there is a psychical manipulation marking this exhibition. By endlessly replaying key images of 1940s and 50s childhoods, *Tiki Touring*

simulates techniques of memory that construct real nostalgia. But the viewer knows that the mechanisms whereby these nostalgias are encoded and transmitted are now profoundly technological, and only 'operationalize our dreams' (Baudrillard 1990: 120).

## Discussion

This chapter provides accounts of both modern and of 'postmodern' or simulated New Zealand nostalgias. Nostalgia in historical and literary text organises nostalgias in a sequential linear form, while constructing cultural identities and differences, while feminist, Maori and immigrant nostalgias reiterate these binaries of identity and difference in their hyperreal profusion and diversity. An engagement with the New Zealand nostalgia industry, considers how familiar nostalgic models are now simulated with ever-increasing technological skill, so that the food, smells, beaches, sea and home movies themselves are reproduced. Increasingly, the technological proliferation of this hyperreality in the multifarious interests of choice and commodification precedes and supersedes the reality of feelings of personal nostalgia.

In Baudrillard's terms, the relation between such reality and its representation is now deeply problematic because of the currency of the simulated production of cultural and emotional phenomena. It is as if reality has changed so drastically that we are now confronted by nostalgia as simulation in the present rather than 'real' nostalgia - as a relation of past/present - with its anchoring in some originary moment.

Critical engagement with the manner of this transformation includes recognising how the technological wizardry of the media and advertising anticipates and programmes, or operationalises, the binaries constituting modern New Zealand nostalgias, and manipulates the linearity of cause-effect relationships. One's

overarching sense is that the hyperrealised nostalgia industry reflects a totalitarian system, whose slick profusion and dominance entirely over-rides what it is trying to tell us about (Baudrillard 1981: 11).

This Baudrillardian type of analysis is a compelling way of analysing the cultural phenomenon of postmodernity. By critically appraising the ways in which a cultural form such as nostalgia now functions, one obtains a sense of the impact of western totalitarianism upon the human bodies and psyches of those whose cultures are not European or not masculine. Unlike modern historical and psychoscientific epistemologies and ontologies that tend to deride, minimise or ignore nostalgia, Baudrillard's theories stress the value of nostalgia for what it tells us about societal change. In the following chapters, my analysis of empirical material critically assesses how these insights play out within the narratives of a group of New Zealand women.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Maori genealogy traces the descent of all living things from the past to the present day where kinship and economic links between people are fixed according to common ancestors and heritage (Barlow 1996: 174).

<sup>2</sup> She cites historian Miles Fairburn "of the themes constituting the Arcadian conception of New Zealand, the most common one was the notion of New Zealand as a land of natural abundance", even where the natural nature had to be cleared to make room for productive nature" (Fairburn, 1989: 29 cited in Bell, 1996: 35).

<sup>3</sup> The influential work of Marcel Mauss on gift exchange was partially based on the social life of the New Zealand Maori.

<sup>4</sup> In 1947, the *New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists* first assembled in New Zealand and Ruth and Brian Manchester's (1996) history of this association clarifies the network of particular knowledges, techniques, explanations and experts that have psycho-scientifically shaped New Zealanders' notion of identity.

<sup>5</sup> Colin James (1992) describes how the politics of the day kept Pakeha and Maori separate: "Maori values persisted on the marae but they were either actually irrelevant to the dominant system or treated as irrelevant." (1992: 12)

<sup>6</sup> In her media history *Where the Girls Are*, Susan J. Douglas stresses the links between consumer culture in the 1950s and 1960s and the roles available to women. "America's consumer culture was predicated on the notion that women were the major consumers of most goods – that was their job after all – and that, to sell to them you had to emphasize their roles as wives and mothers, because it was in these capacities, not in their capacities as secretaries or nurses, that women bought," (1994: 56).

<sup>7</sup> Colin Brown (1989) explains how, from the time of European settlement, Christian churches "played a part in shaping individual and group identities in New Zealand" (p. 237).

<sup>8</sup> Weedon (1987) talks about the ontological basis of texts such as these that assume language is used as a passive tool of communication in the writer's struggle to find their "true nature" (p.83). Key words frequently include such terms as *essence*, *human nature*, *choice*, *self-esteem*, *self-improvement*, the *path*, the *journey* or *quest for the self* and suggest an illusionary 'I' or 'real self'.

<sup>9</sup> The booklet *Maori Women in Focus: Titiro hangai, ka marama* (April 1999) presents 'Key Facts' according to indices of Maori women's life expectancy, unemployment statistics, involvement in the labour force, low income and unpaid work which reflect that "the social and economic outcomes for Maori women continue to fall well below those of non-Maori woman and men".

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<sup>10</sup> From a postcolonial perspective Ashcroft et al (1997: 11-12) suggest that the term 'alterity' specifies the "concrete 'moral other' – the other who is actually located in a political, cultural, linguistic or religious context... [In this way] the construction of the 'subject' itself can be seen to be inseparable from the construction of its others".

<sup>11</sup> The preview reads: "This show offers a fresh take on the Film Archives collections. Highlights include forgotten fashions and fads, foods and festivities – The Formula sings "We're all going to Otaki", Craig Scott insists "New Zealand is yours – Go there Now!" TV commercials advertise the ultimate summer slacks and parades of caravans leave town for camping grounds across the country. But it's not all about getting away, there's also barbecues in the back yard, summer chores, Christmas dinners and para pools".

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: GENERATING ANALYSIS**

This chapter consists of two parts. The first is the method underpinning the collection and transcription of twenty women's narratives of nostalgia. This is followed by a discourse analysis of the transcribed narratives, the presentation of the metadiscourses generated through this procedure and consideration of the concepts authorising these.

### **(1) Qualitative Research Method<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Ethics Committee Approval**

This research project was submitted to the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury for review and approval. The application included a description of the empirical component of the project, the procedures which would be utilised in carrying it out, the type of interview, the participants and their recruitment, and issues of anonymity, confidentiality and risk. It was approved and I have adhered to the principles for which I received ethical approval, including confidentiality of participants.

#### **The Research Participants**

Qualitative research methods generate this research. Although, I have gathered data by interviewing a group of women, I am not a dispassionate observer, many of the women I interviewed are friends, in fact some of my closest friends. My intention in selecting and interacting with research participants was to develop impartial and fair relations with

each of them, focusing on “relations of respect, shared information, openness and clarity of communication” (Reinhartz 1992: 267).

### **Participant Selection**

There were three groups of participants in this research, ranging geographically throughout New Zealand. Some live in isolated rural areas and others are suburban or city dwellers but they are all New Zealand-born, in the years 1945-1950. In each instance, the women first discussed and acquiesced to their involvement verbally and then received an Information Sheet and a Consent Form that they signed and returned to me (see Appendices 1 and 2).

The first group consists of the five women who began school with me in 1945 at Kaikohe Primary in the Bay of Islands. They all now live in different parts of Aotearoa/New Zealand and met with me to celebrate our fiftieth birthdays. This reunion and consequent discussions about childhood faces, places and changes sparked my initial interest in how psychosocial forces such as nostalgia impact upon women. After we had talked about my project and I explained the key issues informing the research, they agreed to participate.

One of them is my best friend who met me in our back paddock almost every day for ten years and with whom I consistently played or walked to school. We sat together in class, stayed at each other's houses, went to Sunday School and Girl's Life Brigade, movies, athletics, bagpipe lessons and dancing classes together. We formed friendship amidst an egalitarian culture with taboos regarding foreigners, female sexuality and communism that attempted to ensure that our Kiwi identity was constituted within masculine and colonial parameters. Our friendship roles reflected military, biblical,

mythological and romantic literary discourses. I loved the adventures we had. To me, this friendship was an escape from the adult world of school and home, where I had to be good, quiet and serious, and I strongly recall the sheer physicality we shared with our other friends too: marching, acting out plays, jumping off shed roofs with a brolly, riding our bikes for miles to Cumber's Pool for a swim, making puppets, long jumping, high jumping and running.

All six of us friends then grew up. Four of us went into the helping professions; of the others, one became a draughtswoman, the other a postmistress. As adults, we have honoured our friendships by letter, phone, or more rarely, by visiting each other. On the year of our fiftieth birthdays we moved together once more; walked, ran, swam, played, laughed and enjoyed continuing the friendship we had experienced years before. We relived the discourse of unswerving friendship, trying to recapture our sense of mutual belonging, warmth, understanding and togetherness. As Stuart Hall suggests "[t]here is nothing so powerful as the image of an integrated organic community in the childhood one has left behind" (1991: 46).

To develop a wider qualitative component, the next decision was to interview some other women. I interviewed a further nine Pakeha, merely reflecting the number who responded to my word-of-mouth search for women from the same generation as my friends and myself. These women differed in that they had grown up in widely divergent geographical locations within this country. Another difference was that, although some of them are my friends, these women did not share fifty years of friendship with me. Although all Pakeha, this group is more diverse in class and socio-economic status than the first group. They also came from a wide range of occupations including two artists,



one unemployed woman, a counsellor, a local body politician, a government employee, a primary and a secondary school teacher and one student.

The next group consists of six Maori women, three who had been at school with me and whose participation has been discussed in the Methodology section. They all presently live in the North Island and also come from a wide range of occupational categories. One works for the justice system, one is a *kaumatua* (respected elder), one is primarily a grandmother, two are educators and counsellors, and one is a Treaty of Waitangi researcher.

Before the interviews I provided each woman with an Information Sheet (see Appendix 1), answered queries about the project and went through the consent form (see Appendix 2) before the interviews were conducted. I interviewed each participant only once, using an audiotape recorder. The interviews were mostly carried out in the participants' own homes. Four of the Maori women met together as a group and were interviewed individually at their marae. I interviewed two others in their homes. Four of the Christchurch group came to my home to be interviewed.

## Interviewing

The participants asked very few questions about the research topic prior to the interview. The interview process remained the same for all of the interviews, which in each case meant that I first focused closely on developing rapport with the women. This initially included noting body posture, voice tone and speed and the use of predicates, and respectfully matching this. From there I asked my leading question: "Tell me about your nostalgia?" and usually the women gave some sort of definition of nostalgia and then

moved into what I call their narratives of nostalgia. I meta-modelled their responses.<sup>2</sup> On occasions I asked for greater specificity, or more explanation of what specific words or phrases meant to them. If the interviewees requested it, the transcriptions of the tapes were returned to them for approval and verification before I began working on them for my analysis. The participants were able to change or delete any material in the transcribed manuscripts if they so wished, but no one actually chose to do this.

This procedure ensured that the process was as accessible and transparent as possible, so that the women were informed participants at all stages of the research process. For all of the participants, Maori and Pakeha alike, there was a shared understanding that each of the interviews were *taonga* (to use a Maori term) or treasures. I have made a commitment to discuss and share this project in one form or another with each of the women when it is completed.

After gathering the data from the Maori women, the *Rangatira* (chief) spent time with me on my own and talked to me about what had happened over the time I had spent there. He talked about the *wairua*, or spirit, in which I carried out the research, and blessed me and the material gathered as part of a process of spiritual counselling. Te Awekotuku argues that this kind of debriefing is particularly important when controversial or long concealed items of secrecy and sensitivity are revealed to the researcher as it ensures appropriate guidance and protection (1991: 71).

## **Confidentiality**

The confidentiality of information and anonymity of participants were protected throughout the research process by the use of pseudonyms. Whenever a piece of transcribed data was included in the analytic chapters, the participant's name was replaced with a randomly ascribed letter of the alphabet, which bore no resemblance to their real name. I transcribed a portion of the material and the person who transcribed the rest of the tapes was made fully cognisant of the need to retain full confidentiality of the material she was working with. When not in use, the tapes and consent forms were kept in a locked cupboard in my locked office and will be placed in a suitably secure place at the conclusion of this work.

## **Meta-modelling**

The first stage of analysis took place during the interview process. After the initial question – “Tell me about your nostalgia?” – consequent questions were generated by meta-modelling techniques. This means an active process of analytic listening when the key words structuring talk about nostalgia are identified. Meta-modelling is a technique where the interviewer listens closely to the words the participant uses for instances of distortion, generalisation and deletion and responds to these through questioning. This enables the interviewer to elicit specificity regarding the discursive field marked by a key word. I regard this interview technique as efficacious because it means asking questions prompting talk that can be analysed in terms of methodology that generates metadiscourses. Through meta-modelling the researcher's ongoing reflection and analysis

is an instrument of the method both in generating data and organising subsequent analysis.

## **(2) Metadiscourses of Nostalgia**

Here there is first a description of the method of constructing metadiscourses of nostalgia, then the voices of the research participants make their initial incursions into nostalgic discourse and the metadiscourses themselves are presented. I finally explore how discourses of memory and childhood authorise these metadiscourses.

### **The Structure of Nostalgia**

The next stage of analysis consisted of several close readings of each of the transcribed texts. The data was then reorganised by marking various discursive differences within each transcript, as well as some of the salient structural, grammatical and syntactical features. Focus on the structural features included identifying the dominant binary fields underpinning the entire data. The most significant oppositional categories in these texts were those constituting the embodied girl-child in the past and the reflective woman-adult in the present.

Further, the concept of binary structure provides the understanding that the very presence of the child in a past world implies the absence of the adult, who is speaking. Although the adult is not present in the narrative, she is contingently present by her absence from, and in, the text. The most significant oppositional categories noted through the narratives are the binaries of past and present, child and adult, positive and negative,

sensation and structure, presence and absence, values and technology. Other binary categories include nature versus culture, men versus women, and European versus Maori.

Typical aspects of grammar and syntax include repetition, nominalisation, cohesive markers, embedding, irony and dialogic features, and these are discussed more specifically in each of the analytic chapters. I am interested in these features because they lend insight into how the text is organised so that there is the sense that the speaker is constructing and maintaining a real referential world. According to Martin and Ringham (2000: 108), in semiotic theory the term ‘reality’ always refers to a constructed reality, related to the signification invested in the world around us. There are two processes that establish reality effects in the women’s nostalgic discourse: iconization (where an impression of the referential world outside the text is produced and sustained), and figurativization (where elements in the text referring to the external physical world evoke sounds, colours or smells to produce immediacy and realism). These evocations of an external physical world are “essential ingredients in the creation of an illusion of reality” (p.108).

### **The Tracks into Nostalgia**

After examining structural, grammatical and syntactical features, the next step is to analyse each woman’s initial entry into nostalgia. At this point we encounter the voices of each of the participants as they engage in practices of discursive rhetoric including intellect, memory and imagination to organise their engagement with the interviewer, and with nostalgia. Here I am reminded of Mauss’ observation that “the body is at once an object of technique, a technical means, and the subjective origin of technique (Mauss

1950: 372). It is useful to analyse these first responses to my question because they display some of the techniques nostalgic discourse uses to organise its reality, authorisation, and logical and rhetorical appeal. The women's first one or two sentences are particularly important because they situate the narrative in present-day temporality (in 'real' time, the time of the interview). They also signify the physical and emotional investment which the speaking position demands of women. As Cixous (1975) explains, there is considerable pain and energy required for women to be positioned as speaking subjects or authoritative voices in the symbolic order, where authoritative female accounts are repressed in favour of patriarchal accounts of femininity. Various rhetorical and technical strategies regarding the process of talking about nostalgia preface the narratives, as the respondents carry out the preliminary task of connecting the interviewer into the meaning-base upon which their whole text will be built.

Nineteen of the initial responses to my key question, "Tell me about your nostalgia?" can be categorised into two main types of entry into the narrative. One consists of those that entered by wanting to ascertain and define the meaning of nostalgia, either in agreement with me, or with a dictionary or encyclopaedia. I read these texts as privileging, or gesturing towards, reason or rationalised thought processes, in their endeavour to gain legitimation through agreement on meanings for the narrative to follow. Other texts enter more directly into the experience of nostalgia via thought, memory, or reflection. Both of these techniques can be read as organising information and memory in keeping with what the interviewer might require. In what follows, both the interviewer's and the women's narrative is italicised.

B. belongs to the first category, where the encyclopaedia has provided her with information that proves contradictory when compared with her own *nostalgic thoughts*.

*B: Well, I looked up the encyclopedia and it said 'yearning for past experiences' and I was a bit confused because yearning is quite a positive word for me and I'm not sure that all my nostalgic thoughts of the past are extremely positive.*

D. begins by apologising for not having *"looked up the meaning of nostalgia because it's a matter of defining what it is, isn't it?"* She then supplants this gesture to dictionary authorisation with a succinct definition of her own, albeit using the modifying terms *"I guess"* and *"sort of"*. This is followed by a long paragraph where we get some sense of going *"back"* as organised according to the stages and qualities of a childhood realm, generating negative and positive attributes in people and the aesthetics of the landscape. By recalling the presence of people and places, and the difference today from what was present in childhood, nostalgia also generates the dichotomy presence/absence.

*D. Yes, um – I guess my nostalgia really goes back to the sort of freedom of my childhood and the beauty of the land I lived in at that stage and the limitless horizon that seemed to surround me and the sense of trust and goodness in people that of course you have as a child which you lose increasingly as the years pass by.*

F's narrative both seeks my authorisation for a joint definition and differentiated nostalgia from sentimentality. *F: "If we come to some agreement on the definition. I don't want to get it mixed up with sentimentality and stuff like that"*. G. gestured toward our common understanding of the term *nostalgia*, then categorised according to the binaries young/old and kid/adult. *G: "Nostalgia, well, is it? – nostalgia means the things that you liked about when you were young, and stuff...when I was a kid..."* E. is quite different. Her nostalgia is also for the past, but she does not *"really define nostalgia"* but

uses the term adjectivally making nostalgia part of her self. *E*: “*I think of myself as quite a nostalgic person*”.

L also asks about what I, the interviewer, mean by nostalgia, and uses the term “*things*”, evoking pluralism about the many activities done in the past but no longer in the present. The binaries presence/absence and also positive/negative reflect the category of memory of having a “*great fondness*” for what she did, but no longer does. The text then links together knowledge and experience, meaning and being, to highlight that nostalgia is “*a style of living*” in the past. In this text nostalgic *being* was quickly joined by a specific nostalgic experience.

*L: When you say nostalgia you mean things that I remember with great fondness doing and no longer do – or?*

*K.C.: Yes that kind of thing*

*L: I mean you could be nostalgic about the style of living that you had which was very open, free and carefree – I mean you’d go barefoot in the paddock.*

P.’s text also links together meaning and experience. She first seeks authorisation by asking me to explain nostalgia a bit better: “*what would you call nostalgia?*” Finally she says unequivocally “[nostalgia is] *whatever you think it is really. I don’t know, I mean just um.*” When I ask “What makes you nostalgic?” however, she immediately accesses her sense of being nostalgic when she experiences “*certain smells*” that “*remind*” her of a specific time and place. *P*: “*Um, bread I think – Bread especially makes me nostalgic – hangi – when I smell hangi – reminds me of my Christmas times at home*”.

For H. nostalgia is an “*it*”, a non-specific marker denoting good or sad memories arranged according to positive or negative polarities. Again, nostalgia denotes “*things*”, but these “*things*” have agency, or dependency, because they “*hold on*” through various dimensions of time. Time is categorised into past, daily life and the future.



*H. Well, it means all the memories of the past, the good past and there's a sad past...so nostalgia is things that hold on from the past to bring into my future and to bring into my daily life.*

Nostalgia constitutes “my grandmother” for S. O, however, talks about nostalgia as “*the thought of a thing*” about her grandmother. For both, nostalgia is the grandmother who shared the childhood time. S: “*I suppose my grandmother's my most nostalgic – (laughs) – cause she brought me up*”. For O, “*the thing*” is the specific auditory experience of the sound of her grandmother's voice. O: “*If I think of any single thing it would be the sound of my grandmother's voice*”.

Other texts also prioritise the process and quality of nostalgic experience. For A. and M, nostalgia is engaging emotionally with a prior time. A: “*...always looking back*”, and “*tied up a lot with emotions associated with past experiences*” which are “*usually positive*”. M., who is one of my childhood friends, heightens these effects by juxtaposing temporality and spatiality and going back to construct a place, a part of New Zealand, connected to positive emotions and a time of simplicity. M: “*...where I felt happiest, safest, sort of in the north, where things were uncomplicated*”.

K. is another of my primary school friends. She queries whether my presence as an interviewer is the reason why her first nostalgic “*thought*” was the town where we were children together. K: “*Well, because you're here...my first thought was Kaikohe, but whether that's related to you being here or not – but yes it has to be Kaikohe*”.

I.'s text sequentially constructs a positive/negative polarity by claiming nostalgia is initially connected to “*happiness*”. A “*fuller*” (quantitatively measurable) feeling, linked to what might be “*happy*”, or “*not so happy*” follows this.

*I: Nostalgia, I would like to think is something to do with happiness... but I also think it's fuller than that... basically I always think of nostalgia as being happy, but in fact maybe that's not right, maybe it's not so happy.*

B's was another text that uses the term "fullness", but in her case it is to denote "the past", although she remained very clearly in the present.

*B.: Remembering the past with a fullness.*

*K.C. How do you remember the past with fullness? Tell me about that?*

*B. Um well from triggers I think, either photographs, smells, food, um movies, revisiting old movies.*

C's conceptual engagement "calls up the past" signifying both, or either, a spiritual or a technological contact with an environment.

*C: It means calling up the past to me. Getting lost if I'm in the place where I may – time and space where I may have such luxury – getting lost in what was – where I've been, what I've done – um music particularly sparks me off.*

This seems to be a distant place over which she has control. After this "calling-up" however, there is a sense of disorientation, as nostalgia consequently means "getting lost in what was – where I've been – what I've done". This narrative pushes nostalgia into a distant place in the past with which she engages voluntarily and selectively if she has the "time and space where I may have such luxury".

N. first commented upon the quality of my question, then suggested that nostalgia ("it") is something that happens, as if "it" has a life of its own, when one is a certain age. Like menstruation, it is an age-specific phenomenon.

*N: Oh – that's a very open-ended question – Well I think one interesting thing about my nostalgia is that it didn't seem to happen until I was about oh – until I could remember at least twenty years ago – so it is a phenomenon of maturity, so it seems to be an increasing phenomenon of maturity.*

In juxtaposition to the other ways of entering the text, R. does not directly address the term *nostalgia* but immediately enters into nostalgic reflection about “*part of the things*”. She positions her present-day self as being reflective from time to time, which emphasises the contemporaneity of the narrative and of her thoughts. From the opening statement below, R. engages immediately with a referential world that includes her experiences as a child in the river.

*R: Part of the things I reflect on periodically is being brought up in this valley, and I was talking to somebody this morning about it and ah – and I often think about how the children...*

J.’s narrative enters into nostalgia in quite a different way. It neither seeks authorisation, nor enters directly into the experience of nostalgia. J. gradually oriented the narrative according to movement back and forward through time: into the childhood past, into the future and then to the recent past. (J. is one of my childhood friends who came to Waiheke Island). She then stops trying to think about nostalgia in terms of time and connects with her experience of “*being*”.

*J. Yeah what is it to me? I wouldn't have a clue. I mean it's like going back eh? But where? And when?*

*K.C. How do you go back?*

*J. Probably cause I don't, I go forward eh? That's my problem. Um – you see it changes for me, yeah. Once upon a time it would have been all about my childhood and that, but I don't know if it is now. It's almost like – what comes – like the only thing I can think about right at the moment is Waiheke Island and that's interesting 'cause it's so recent and I'm just – I'm trying to think why. Ooh its funny, it's not even about – no I know now – it's not even about a time and a place, it's just about being – yeah it is.*

Finally there is Q’s text. Here, nostalgia constructs the binary “old values” and “technology”. “Old values” denote personal qualities of nature, innocence and simplicity which are organised in prior to, and in opposition to, “modern technology”. Here, my prompt question was different:

K.C.: *When I ask you about your nostalgia, what do you think about?*

Q.: *Um – old values really, old um.*

K.C.: *What do you mean, Old values?*

Q.: *Um – the simple, simple um – well no, not even simple, it's um, almost innocence – ah, innocence in the way that um modern, you know technology.*

K.C.: *Yeah?*

Q.: *Um – you know, hasn't overtaken um – it's very personal, you know, what relates to yourself, but I'd say that innocence, that um – nature's involved a lot. Um even sort of before the time of modern technology – you know I was going to say the telephone then.*

In this first encounter with nostalgia, there are many voices attempting in different ways to find a way into the discourse of nostalgia and attempting to pin down a univocal text. There is heterogeneity in how nostalgia can be analysed, reflected upon, thought about, and/or experienced. The women lend a sense of how this discourse begins organising a referential world – the time and place of childhood. Echoing Proust, who claimed that “[m]y work is dominated by the distinction between involuntary memory and voluntary memory” (1913: 13), nostalgic discourse includes nuances of memory. Generally speaking though, the experience of nostalgia primarily includes remembering the past, and arranging this past according to positive/negative, absence/presence binaries. The positive past includes the now absent realm of childhood differentiated from present day adulthood. The childhood realm (*up North*) denotes the presence of values, spatiality and people (including *Grandmother*). There are attributes of freedom, limitless horizons, beautiful land, good trustworthy people, things you liked, simplicity, innocence, old values, happiness, safety, and the lack of complication. Nostalgic discourse orders these in oppositional relationship to the present day, where these attributes are no longer present.

In this introductory foray, nostalgia is variously presented as a phenomenon, nostalgia is “it”, or “things”, can be personally possessed (*my nostalgia*), and is *being*, in

contrast to any particular *time* and *place*. Nostalgia is also a form of identity, something one can think of one's self as. Most notably, the introduction to the women's narratives constructs nostalgia within a conceptual framework of space and time (including past, present and future).

## **Lexical Fields**

Following Grace (1997), and Grace and Arnoux (1994), this section discusses the method of discourse analysis, which identifies lexical fields, and key words and phrases from the transcriptions, and lists these to create succinct, and linear, models of the discourses, called metadiscourses. In their unpublished paper (1994) Grace and Arnoux refer to the work of Matoré (1973) as a primary source of this concept of a metadiscourse. This method means engaging with the whole body of the research participants' transcriptions and initially involves grouping together synonymous sets of words, or those that have a common denominator. The method means being especially alert for those words and phrases that are significantly dominant within the data as a whole, or those that give insights into the research foci. In this way, I am an instrument of the method as, in keeping with my research goals, I decide what is a dominant word. The grouping together of lexical fields includes identifying key words that are particularly powerful or significant in how they might characterise aspects of social practices. Such key words and phrases then become the means of gaining insight into the psychocultural implications of women's nostalgia.

## Metadiscourses of Nostalgia

After extracting the most significant lexical fields across all of the transcripts, I wrote headings that differentiated between each of the fields and created lists, or themes and sub-themes – what are called isotopies in the critical metalanguage of semiotics (Martin and Ringham 2000: 77).<sup>3</sup> The three themes I identified are: Discourse 1 – Home, Discourse 2 – Homekilling and Discourse 3 – Homesickness. I then wrote metadiscourses of nostalgia by taking key words and phrases from each of the themes and sub-themes and blending these together in a linear structure that replicated the structure of the entire set of discourses. In other words, I was replicating the model of the discourse through points of commonality that appeared when all of the transcripts were considered. This meant engaging with the macro-structure of the texts taken altogether, that is, the overall discursive structuring of them, rather than the specific idiosyncratic content of the data.

It is important to remember that the focus of the inquiry was not specifically on the differences between Maori and Pakeha experiences of nostalgia, although this research takes place in a country where scholarship is presently preoccupied with these differences. At this stage in the process my interest was solely to assemble the structure of all these separate but now blended nostalgic narratives. In Discourse 1 – Home, the texts generate key words, which, although they come from Maori and Pakeha women, construct a unified field. This changes however when in Discourse 2 –Homekilling, Pakeha and Maori discourses are discernibly different, while in Discourse 3 – Homesickness, there is the striking impact of the discourse conserving Maori culture.

## Metadiscourses

The three metadiscourses, with the key words and phrases taken from the transcripts underlined, are presented in the sections that follow:

### METADISCOURSE 1 – HOME

I have very fond memories of a wonderfully free childhood when I was a happy little girl experiencing the spirit of this valley and summer holidays at the beach. It was the happiest time of childhood of safety, innocence and simplicity. I remember that I was peaceful, in control and experiencing great unity and wholeness. We were incredibly aware of the changing seasons. The colours were very beautiful, smells were extraordinarily important, and I vividly remember the food we had. It was great fun. I remember good friends and plenty of kids to play with. We had imagination and worked out amazing and elaborate fantasy games where we used to pretend. The natural environment was familiar and part of you. There were dangers which made it stimulating and so exciting.

It was a caring time where union and interaction with each other was important. We lived in a secure community. Communities helped each other. We cared how people treated each other. People shared and there was a humbleness in how people lived their lives. I remember the hospitality. We had clothes to wear, food to eat and we were doing things as a close family unit. Us kids had some heavy responsibility and we all worked together or else the unit would break down. None of us had much money but we weren't competing. Nobody had cars. We didn't have ice cream, red meat or pork unless it was a tangi, someone's birthday or Christmas. Mum and Dad took us on picnics. We'd get a sack of pipis, a loaf of bread, a pound of butter and we'd go and get oysters, flounder, fish and eels.

### METADISCOURSE 2 – HOMEKILLING

#### MAORI

The total acknowledgment of Maori is to their land. Colonisation began the process of alienation of Maori in their own land. In my own family there was great grief when my Nanna's land was taken by the Crown and given as a gift to the nation. This was followed by a lot of struggle to survive during the Depression. I was brought up by a mother and father who had a whole set of

different values. It meant having to try to understand my mother's values and incorporate the values of my father and the community as well. Sometimes they didn't meet and I got into trouble with my parents. My Maori parent reckoned learning Maori will never get you anywhere in the world. We were confused because we were told we weren't Maori. My grandparents had discussed whether the children be brought up European or Maori and they decided European so they would have more possibility through their lives. They also wanted them to be nurtured in the Maori sense of the word but we lost our roots when my mother was sent to work in the Pakeha world. There is grief in realising how much we miss out on. My family left our home area and denied our Maori side in the Pakeha environment. My Maori parent was forbidden to speak Maori at school and as a result I have not been able to speak Maori. Through ignorance we lost a lot of years when we did not feel we belonged here. It took me a long time to get over Nanna's death and the death of my mother.

Because of scientific European land management practices, there is the loss of traditional food gathering sources that you just dream about now. This is made more complex because of the accessibility of fast food. There are changes in family values. We used to make things the old way but now children are too sophisticated and always want everything to come to them, to be bought for them. Children only work for money and have no responsibilities, initiative or independence.

## METADISCOURSE 2 – HOMEKILLING PAKEHA

We didn't mix very much with different cultures. You could see Maori people but you could not integrate with them. There were all sorts of scary, eccentric people around too; some of them were shell-shocked. Others were into that alternative life-style before it was fashionable. There were certain kids I wasn't allowed to play with because of class-consciousness. My parents didn't help me academically. There was a hell of a lot of tension and violence around them. Though my practical needs were met, I never saw my mother and father kiss or hold hands. I was uncomfortable in the world they created. I had to wonder why they seemed to understand the world in a way I didn't.

Mum was born into a family where men are very important. There was a lot of expectation that I would be a pretty little girl, this princess that my mother thought she had. My mother was religious. My parents were really strict and unfair with different expectations for girls and for boys. I was very aware of inequality, that we didn't have all the privileges men and boys seemed to have. As a female I didn't feel any sense of worth or place in society. Women grew up without any great sense of responsibility.



## METADISCOURSE 3 – HOMESICKNESS

### CONTEMPORARY MAORI PRACTICES OF CONSERVATION

Nostalgia is my life now as a Maori person in Aotearoa and as a woman of whakapapa descent. I am now back here at home on the land and the reality is that it is part of my life, my lifeline and solid foundation. My nostalgia is focused on things that hold on from the past to bring into the future in my daily life now. It is an intrinsic value we don't see physically but we feel physically. The deep and intrinsic part of my whole journey is coming back home to manawhenua and the whole Maori worldview. Our uncle taught us all our whakapapa and taught us to love the area again through his stories. We have just had a whanau reunion and we need to get back up here to join with our cousins and upgrade the tupuna stones in the cemetery.

Nostalgia means fulfilling our role as parents, as grandparents so our kids will follow through. It means appreciating the learning and politicising that goes on at the marae and getting my children to acknowledge those as well. That's exactly what my parents used to do. I am instrumental in bringing back old values. As a grandmother I hope I can pass wisdom onto my grandchildren. We are getting back to the old days when communities helped each other.

## METADISCOURSE 3 – HOMESICKNESS

### CONTEMPORARY PAKEHA PRACTICES OF CONSERVATION

My nostalgia is quite age-coloured and increasingly a phenomenon of maturity. I've come to believe that time is an important thing. I've lost that spontaneity or willingness to be a daredevil and I think that's a pity. Nostalgia now is intimately connected with identity. It's about shared experience and affirming who we are with other people who were there. We were the generation who were the future. I think it has something to do with the community being small, out of the war, and the depression, a new start in life. I guess one of the strongest things is that you feel you have a family and a history and that continuity. It just that whole thing of belonging in the world.

I experience nostalgia as wholeness, so it's a returning to those instances but usually for me there has to be a trigger. Photos and music particularly spark me off. Sometimes you'll see something that's old and it'll take you right back. Nostalgia is the things I won't throw away because I deem them important, markers along my way. Just looking out the window here at what is now a thriving suburb, I recall how it used to be hillsides of golden grass. I think as you go back with the memory to nostalgia that possibly in a sense you idealise it.

That's a very deep nostalgic feeling in that even now I hold it as immediately present, that's what I mean by deep. I can recall and revisit it any time.

Nostalgia means freedom to be real, not to have to play games and live up to other people's expectations. Those experiences stay with you forever, they're just part of me. I understand it differently now. It's a real crucible of joy that I can return to if I need to be nourished. That's the joy of meeting up with old friends. It's that sense of being together; you can't actually put it into words, the laughter, and the sense of knowing I was cared for, the sense of belonging, the sense that it was good and worthwhile to be alive. We don't recognise nostalgia enough.

### **Authorising Nostalgia through Memory and Childhood**

This nostalgia is a curious mix. It includes the components of Discourse 1 concerning immersion in what I call 'Home', a time and place of natural, personal and communal abundance, embodied sensation, pleasure, spontaneity and aliveness in nature. In Discourse 2 however, there is a conscious remembering of processes of subjugation or Homekilling, which despoils this joyous time. Discourse 3 – Homesickness then reflects attempts to draw elements of Discourse 1 into the present day in an effort to conserve them.

Within the chronology of the interviews the three discourses generally appear sequentially in each transcript. Discourse 1 – Home is usually at the beginning, followed by Discourse 2 and then the discourse of the present day, Discourse 3 – Homesickness. Although this is the general format, there are places in the texts where all three discourses are interwoven. In some transcripts Discourse 2 might be introduced in the midst of Discourse 1, and then disappear, to be reintroduced in Discourse 3. Although the narratives juxtapose these three discursive fields in order, other strands sometimes were generated that moved counter to the chronologically ordered sequence. At the same time, my analysis of nostalgic meaning has established that Discourse 1 – Home needs to be

considered first in order that it might act as a reference point for the other two discourses.

The sections that follow look more specifically at the construction of these metadiscourses. I have determined how nostalgia organises its macro-knowledges and arguments, but how are authoritative practices utilised to inform and sanction these organising techniques?

Responses to the prompt question in each case generates a contemporaneous 'self', in touch with the real time of the interview, who is concerned to engage with the temporality of the past, primarily through memory but also through thought and reflection. As a result, the oppositional categories past and present are introduced. The most distinctive feature at the discursive level of the individual women's narratives is how they manage two discrete temporalities, together with two clearly discernible discourses of the past. The discourses of the past are distinguishable from those of the present because, through practices of memory and imagination, key words and phrases generate childhood worlds. These practices engender immersion in the vivid multi-sensory world of Discourse 1. In Discourse 2 however, the transcripts present the violation that disturbs this positive world as it is traversed by modern categories of social organisation. The salience of memories designates an indeterminate and universal legitimacy to childhood, through the "embodied immediacy" (Csordas 1994: 146) of Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1950s.

## **Memory of Childhood - Authorising Embodiment**

[M]emory possesses authority for the fearful self in a world where it is necessary to have authority in order to Question Authority (Hampel 1996: 211).

In these nostalgic discourses past temporality is authorised by and constructed in the vocabularies and “varied set of systems and practices” of memory (Geoghegan 1996: 15). Appeals to the authority of memory are evident in the vocabulary of every woman’s narrative. The introductory and most frequently used technique to access the past is by selecting specific memories from what P. called *all the memories of the past*. Memory is most often denoted by the use of the verb form *I remember* and each participant uses this term as many times as the term *nostalgia*. Only a few women also used the terms *memory* and *memories* and, as we shall see, the saliency of the verbal formulation is significant.

This prevalence of memory terms relates to how memory is valorised in western (including Maori) culture as a necessary condition of cultural and personal identity, engendering all the elements and themes of religious, philosophical, social, historical and literary construction. Memory appears to be what James McConkey (1996) calls “the chief element of consciousness” (p.124).

Memory and forgetfulness are also pivotal in the discourses of psychoanalysis, psychology and psychiatry. As we know from his description of the Fort! Da! Fort Da! game (1919), Freud considered the highly prized category of intelligence to be dependent not only upon Oedipal resolution but upon techniques of demonstrating memory learned as a child, when one began to construct identifications amidst presences and absences. Csordas (1994) submits, specifically in the North American context, that memories are valued as significant constituents of the self possibly because of the influence of psychoanalysis “or some deeply embedded notion of which psychoanalysis is a manifestation” (p.110). Doubtless New Zealand discourses of ‘psy’ share the western ethnopsychology whereby memory symbolises the self and allows access to a privileged

area of communion with that “other who becomes myself” (Csordas 1994: 110). As Csordas argues, techniques that formally access memory within the charismatic healing of memories, or in psychotherapy, are valued. Indeed, Csordas shows how the ethnopsychology generating an emotionally salient experience of the self reflects, and is reflected by, the symbolic value of memory.

This regard is not only a western trait. For Maori, memory is accorded a privileged status as the facility upon which the oral transmission of *whakapapa* (genealogy) depends. For Te Awakotuku, ancient technical, strategic and mnemonic skills reflect how “intellectual stamina and prodigious memory were essential qualifications for a highly learned human being” (1991: 63). Russell Bishop says that specific narratives like *whakapapa* and *raranga korero* (stories of genealogical figures and events) had to maintain strong criteria of precision and persuasion.

The *mana* (power, prestige) of the storyteller ... was not only the exact recitation of the words, but also in the power of their delivery, the power the storyteller had to persuade others of their position (Bishop 1996: 25).

Today Maori continue these practices through displaying a strong preference for oral narrative. The *wairua* or spirituality in stories, (significantly in the interview process) binds the listener to the teller beyond the connection created by the words of the story alone (p.25).

## Memory Practices

For women in their fifties, childhood memories are long-term memories. Linton (1986: 57-59) proposes a specific structural sequence in long-term memory, which is helpful for understanding how nostalgia draws upon memories of importance. According to Linton,

there is first a generalised mood or tone. In Discourse 1 – Home, memory selectively engages with an affective dialogue of emotions, feelings and embodied experiences. Some of the phrases used are “*just a nice memory of this lovely old lady*”, “*my favourite memory*”, “*my most nostalgic male memory*”, and “*a lot of good memories*”. Themes and sub-themes then unify these specific facets of life.

According to Linton, there are more specific groups of memories called *extendures*, the significant parts of which are the events and episodes (p.58). These events and episodes are presented according to who was there, where the memory occurred and what happened. For example, P. talks about “*my first memory of being here*”, and “*memories of Mum and Dad and the other kaumatua, aunties and uncles that used to be here*”. The organisation of memories includes specific modalities reflecting such things as the temperature and the clarity of the memory. Interestingly, M. differentiated between the technique of remembering and the memory itself. M: “*I haven’t got a good memory when I go back remembering things...I have got good memories basically*”.

In Discourses 1 and 2 the term “*I remember*,” is characteristically linked to the connectors “*when*” and “*I used to*”, to establish textual cohesion and a logical relation between the authorisation of memory and the textual construction of a specific memory. Both of these connectors are reiterated following the verb *remember* throughout the interview texts to sustain this cohesion. The term *when* is used to designate specific times: *when we were kids*, *when I was a kid*, and *when I was young*. The phrase *used to* introduces specific activities that happened in the past; L: “*I used to get up and do things*”; “*I used to play the piano*”. For K., “*He used to ride up on his bike*”, “*We used to play hockey*”, and “*Mum used to make all our clothes out of other things*”.

This designation can be called diachronic because it reflects the arrangement of time in an historical perspective and “relates to occurrences arranged in a sequence” (Martin and Ringham 2000: 50). Diachrony is generated by reference to an originary place which is referenced anteriorly, that is, to a preceding, former or earlier time (S.O.E.D). The sense of anteriority, of times occurring ‘back then’ organises memory to which one looks back, or goes back to, or which keeps coming back or sends one back. As P. said, “*if I can start from here and go backwards instead of starting from way back cause I’ll go all over the place*”.

Throughout Discourses 1 and 2, the sense of reversing the linear progression of time by reference to “*going back*” in memory has the effect of drawing the interviewer further into the space of childhood. The stalling of time suspends ‘real’ time and entices one into the time and space of memory. In N.’s text, the condensed clause *it’s* sustains textual cohesion within the topic of nostalgia and then the depth and interiority of memory is metaphorically reiterated: “*it’s from so far back in your memory that it’s like as if it’s alive - it’s like your blood. It flows through you*”.

This evocation of sensory metaphor reminds us that nostalgia is itself a bodily practice engaging multiple sensory modalities. The phenomenological notion of habit as an embodied practice grounding memory is important to mention here too, as Csordas explains, “Bourdieu’s analysis of the socially informed body in its *habitus* complements Merleau-Ponty’s project of inserting the perceptual body synthesis into the cultural world” (Csordas 1994: 143). The reference to particular habits reinforcing a bodily mode of being in the world enables the approach taken here, where semiotic memory is understood as sign, or language, and phenomenological memory is understood as

consciousness. As Casey notes: “In place of the two-dimensional understanding of the memory image as visual representation, we must favour notions of the world as “an underlying field of representation for the specific context remembered,” and of the presence “of the rememberer himself or herself at the scene remembered” (Casey 1987: 69 cited in Csordas 142). In this light, memory is an embodied process.

## Childhood

The whole nostalgia of my childhood (D.)

Childhood is to be understood as a social construct, it makes reference to a social status delineated by boundaries that vary through time and from society to society but which are incorporated within the social structure and thus manifested through and formative of certain typical forms of conduct (Jenks 1996: 7).

As well as utilising memory, Discourses 1. and 2. appeal to the acknowledgedly authoritative status of the discourse of childhood in western culture. As identified in Discourses 1 and 2 and as Jenks points out, childhood always relates to a specific cultural setting. Reading through the metadiscourses it is clear that nostalgic childhood in Discourse 1 particularly generates a social structure of symbolic exchange. In Levin’s terms this is an ambivalent realm, in the sense that the concept of social form is linked to “[t]he concept of symbolic exchange [which] would appear to be an attempt to integrate the concept of social form with an expressivist concept of meaning, as an emergent process of the body” (Levin 1996: 84-5). Discourse 2 also refers to a childhood setting but is increasingly subjected to “system-like abstractions striving towards structural closure and ‘perfection’” (Levin 1996: 93).

Childhood, meaning the child *then* in both of these Discourses stands in dichotomous relationship to adulthood, the adult *now* of Discourse 3. Childhood situates



memories according to a developmental categorisation of human life, which is determined according to ages and stages and spatial measurement. The individualised, yet (in the contemporary west) universal and sacrosanct, significance of childhood for the research participants is stressed by possessive forms including *my childhood*, *our childhood*, *your childhood* (*your* used generically to denote *our*). These forms are used much more frequently than reference to an impersonal form such as *the childhood* and *that childhood*.

Use of the term *childhood* “the time during which one was a child” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary) makes childhood generalisable and most likely to appeal to a wide variety of listeners through the sense of their inclusion. Jenks (1996) notes that the category of childhood is a totalising concept that “concretely describes a community that at some time has everybody as its member” (p.6). Here, individual selves authorise the past through reference to either a generalised individual (H: “*you have the good nostalgia or some special times of your childhood*”) or a collective one (M: “*Our childhood was sun and fun and beach*”). According to Jenks, “the category dignifies a primary experience in the existential biography of each individual... [because] it is the only truly common experience of being human” (p.6).

Plural pronouns give the impression that this childhood was a communal one that ‘we’ all shared and represents a universalisation of experience. These memories of reflect a world where children, including siblings, relations and friends, all had experiences together. G: “*when we were kids*”; “*we were really into kids’ games and kids’ life*”; “*we didn’t, as a child, sort of pick up on that side of it*”. H: “*we always wore sandals to go swimming in the eel pond*”, “*where we were under the mountain was so green*”.

Jenks argues that the discourse of human development, constituted as a longitudinal approach to time and progress, shapes social and relational experiences of time to the extent it is “the primary metaphor through which childhood is made intelligible” (p.36). Situating childhood in the past, *when I was young*, might appear to make the concept of development appear natural, discursively conflating physical growth and social progress within the ideology of capitalist individualism (p.39). In the research participants’ narratives the concept of development reflects heterogeneity in how the participants refer to childhood ages. For example, *when I was young as a child* might mean *when I was about twelve*, or *when I was ten*, or *nine or eight*, or even *from five to ten*. One woman talked about herself as being in *the seven, eight, nine age group*. Childhood age is one of the key reference points or normative structures around which nostalgia is generally organised and yet, although all concern the pre-adolescent child, age seems in these research results to be a fluid marker, varying from woman to woman, and from memory to memory.

Jenks cites Hillman (1975) on how theories of childhood always point towards the social construction of reality: “Whatever we say about children and childhood is not altogether really about children and childhood” (Hillman cited in Jenks 1996: 69). For Jenks, “the child [is] not neutral but always moral and political” (p.69). In his view, the very saliency of regressive narratives, with individuals excavating roots and attachments from the past by reference to the ‘inner child’, is “a private type of re-enchantment” (pp.106-7). Is that what New Zealand women’s narratives of nostalgia signify? Does the interplay of temporalities, themes and authorities indeed dignify “re-enchantment”? In the light of the over-riding concern that asks how women’s experiences of nostalgia

might act as a seditious critique of the current psychocultural world, this question is contemplated in the chapters that follow.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Method includes “descriptions of the researcher’s activity or work...where the author describes having done something because of a decision about what needed to be done” (Reinharz 1992: 9).

<sup>2</sup> To clarify, the ‘meta-model’ is a verbal model, a way of listening to the form of verbalisation rather than the content. Developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder (1985) from transformational linguistics, meta-model questions are designed to form connections between the language spoken and the experience, or reference structure, that that language represents.

<sup>3</sup> Martin and Ringham (2000) explain how “isotopy replaces the traditional terms ‘theme’ and ‘motif’” and provide continuity by allowing for the “sustained meaning in the flow of a text” (p.77).

## CHAPTER NINE: HOME

What is most true is poetic (Cixous 1997: 4).

The relation to the world is a relation of the whole body (Baudrillard 1998: 96).

Discourse 1 – Home, is where women's memories and imaginations generate an interior world where meaning comes from the body. It is also most like my prefaced nostalgia. In juxtaposition with the authoritative discourses of memory and childhood, a discussion of imaginative and sensory modalities situates this chapter within the ontology and epistemology of semiotics and of critical phenomenology. Then I consider salient characteristics of Baudrillard's notion of symbolic exchange, as well as Cixous' and Kristeva's readings of the Lacanian Imaginary. The remainder of the chapter, in eleven short sections (plus a final discussion) presents my analysis of the research participants' construction of their girlhood experiences of being immersed in a symbolic world. As a methodological note, short citations from the research participant's transcripts are italicised when they are embedded in the main body of the text.

### **Imagination**

The transcripts constituting Discourse 1 – Home predominantly evoke the terms and vocabularies of sensory memory and imagination. Here, the prestigious status of memory in considerations of childhood scaffolds the less psychoculturally acclaimed practice of imagining. Csordas argues that imagining is independent of memory or perception, so although memory might well condition an act of imagination, neither memory (nor perception) causes imagination (p. 81-82). In some usage, the term

*imagination* has a pejorative meaning in keeping with how imagination is positioned in a world that valorises reason and logic. Imagination is

[t]he action of imagining, or forming a mental concept of what is actually not present to the senses; the result of this, a mental image or idea (frequently characterised as vain, false etc.) (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary).

In addition, in an interview situation with an interviewer of the same generation and gender, it is relevant to recall that a particular feature of imagination is “its special responsiveness to external, cultural influence and direction” (Csordas 1996: 83). The women’s talk synthesised in Discourse 1 - Home not only utilises memory and imagination but also constitutes a type of embodied performance. A phenomenological approach to the imagination demands awareness of the contrast between an empiricist notion of an image as a mental object, or a representation or copy of sensory perception and a phenomenological description of the image as a modality of consciousness. In these terms, imagination is also a kind of act because “consciousness is inherently intentional” (Csordas p.80- 81). Hence, a phenomenological method, which includes corporeality in a definition of consciousness and a unified sensorium, instrumentalises the field of imaginative activity necessary to empirically reflect imagination. The complementary relationship of semiotic and phenomenological approaches to nostalgic memory is underpinned by recognising how the former is a function of textuality, whereas the phenomenological is a function of embodiment.

[W]hereas the literary image “exists” primarily as a feature of sign relations, it can also be taken up into experience as an image in consciousness. However, the embodied image in consciousness, because it is invariably an image of something or about something, can be abstracted from consciousness and analyzed as a sign function. The existential difference is that the embodied image is essentially present to, and immediate in consciousness, whereas the literary image is only secondarily so. On the other hand, the literary image is essentially embedded in the textual or symbolic order, whereas the embodied image is only secondarily derived from the symbolic order (Csordas 1994: 81).

A method that includes the complementarity of semiotics and phenomenology recognises both the image-as-sign and the image-in-consciousness (p.85). In order for the sign to become engaged in the world it must be able to be acted or performed.

When it is, it enters the domain of embodiment....Its inherence in the order of textuality guarantees the image-as-sign communicative value and potential rhetorical force, whereas its inherence in the order of embodiment guarantees the image-in-consciousness intentionality and presentational immediacy...the image in consciousness can endure only as it is remembered as a sign or re-engaged in consciousness (Csordas 1994: 87).

We can now imagine how the relation between the bodily experiences of nostalgia and language about nostalgia reflects the relation between semiotics and phenomenology. In brief, the participants remembered, reflected on or thought about, bodily experiences of nostalgia, which they also think about through the body. Consequently, analysis of accounts of the bodily experience of nostalgia constructs a place between the analytics of textuality, and being-in-the-world or embodiment. Reading nostalgia as an embodied phenomenon means interpreting the lived experience of nostalgia, which is the source of the text, as well as interpreting nostalgia as a text representing those experiences.

To conceptualise the fields of imagination and memory within the paradigm of embodiment (because imagination and memory are embodied self-processes) means understanding that these experiences are phenomena of consciousness by virtue of perception, through a combination of sensory modalities. For my analysis I draw upon the list of sensory modalities specified in neurolinguistics by Bandler and Grinder (1985). In their terms sensory experiences can be listed according to representational systems that refer to what one sees, or the visual modality, hears/auditory, feels/kinaesthetic, smells/olfactory and tastes/gustatory.

Whichever representational system a person has 'in consciousness' (in the narratives) is evident in the predicates (verbs, adverbs and adjectives) that are used. A

further distinction is that of internally, as opposed to externally, generated experience. Externally generated experiences are those things perceived as being seen, heard, felt and smelt and tasted outside of one's own body. Internally generated experiences that characterise talk that recounts memories of childhood in an interview situation are those experiences generated within, such as things imagined, recalled, recollected and remembered. The neurolinguistic model of describing sensory modalities systems is used solely to provide terms useful for critically analysing the embodied character of the phenomenon of nostalgic experience.

### **Re-enacting a Symbolic world through Memory and Imagination**

Analysis of the sensory modalities used by the women is included throughout the remainder of the chapter making it important to stress here how crucial Baudrillard's term "seduction" is to this analysis. To explain this term Baudrillard (1979) refers to an ancient fable about the attraction of the fragrant odour used by the panther to capture its victims. The panther hides because of the terror its appearance would cause, and bewitches its victims by emitting scent. Baudrillard asks:

But what does it mean to say that the panther seduces by its scent? Why is its scent seductive...Seduction lies with the annulment of signs, of their meaning, with their pure appearance. Eyes that seduce have no meaning....The panther's scent is also a senseless message – and behind this message the panther is invisible – Sorcery is formed by what lies hidden (Baudrillard 1976: 76).

Baudrillard refers here to a form of relation with no depth of meaning. Grace explains that Baudrillard's account of seduction is not concerned with representation, but is used as a symbolic or 'collective ritual action' constructing a symbolic world (Grace 2000: 144-145). Consequently, seduction imposes a ritual rather than a 'natural' order "predicated on the notion of a circulation of the gift" (p.42). In the act of ritual, what is important is the immediacy of the performing rather than identity, difference,

reference, generalisation or abstraction. According to Grace, although Baudrillard's concept of seduction is anthropologically anchored in the era when societies had 'gift exchange', it is a concept that has enduring qualities as an abstraction of symbolic exchange. She describes how the term seduction, together with challenge reflect "a social process whereby existence and non-existence are not ontologically polarised but coexistent "always already present, always in a continuing cycle of encounter and transformation (Grace 2000: 42).

[T]he ritual process is an enactment that literally involves the play of appearances...to be understood as a symbolic action – 'collective ritual action' with no depth of meaning, involving a superficial play of signs; the unmediated resonance of signs that removes them from the domain of the code (that is, amenable to monosemic interpretation), and creates a symbolic world (Grace 2000: 144).

This symbolic world where there are forces of "the play of the world and seduction" (Baudrillard 1983: 139) conceptualises human relations in a way that is similar to Levinas' notion of alterity. Similar in that relations are unbound to the monism that reduces the plurality of beings into the unity of "the Same", or excludes the otherness of any irreducible "Other" (Levinas 1962: 11). Here in Grosz' summation of Levinas' concept:

A form of otherness irreducible to and unable to be modelled on any form of projection of or identification with the subject. The term refers to a notion of the other outside the binary opposition between self and other, an independent and autonomous other with its own qualities and attributes. The other is outside of, unpredictable by and ontologically prior to the subject (Grosz 1989: xiv).

The Baudrillardian symbolic is a realm where meanings are ambivalently constituted amidst the embodied tensions and pleasures of seduction, challenge and jouissance.<sup>1</sup>

What makes you exist is not the force of your desire (wholly a nineteenth century imaginary of energy and economy), but the play of the world and seduction; it is the passion of playing and being played, it is the passion of illusion and appearance, it is that which comes from elsewhere, from others, from their faces, their language, their gestures – and that which bothers you, lures you, summons you into existence; it is the encounter, the surprise of what exists before you, outside of you, without you – the marvellous exteriority of the pure object, the pure event....[B]eing doesn't give a



damn about its own being; it is nothing, and exists only when it is lifted out of itself, into the play of the world and the vertigo of seduction (Baudrillard 1983: 139).

Discourse 1 – Home generates this territory through specific experiences of women's embodiment. Memory and imagination, voice and sensation construct what the narratives themselves sometimes call *magical* experiences. The sensory engagement is obvious as A. echoes visual, olfactory, auditory, and kinaesthetic representations to talk about what is *in front of* her eyes.

*Whole scenes will be played out in front of me, not in my head, just in front of my eyes. So I'm back with the smells, with the sounds and the different – usually associated with a kind of laughter. It seems to lose all its magic in words, once you put it into words. Yes, it was quite magical; the remembering is for the magical not the concrete experience in time (A.)*

In A's text the concept of Home is governed and facilitated by sensual representations of the emotionally fluid world of symbolic exchange and seduction. As she indicated, in this chaotic space meaning comes from feelings, experiences and sensations and the symbolic operation "lose[s] all its magic in words". The emotional immediacy of the body enacts the "magic" that disappears when subjected to specific meanings resulting from the conjunction of a signifier and signified. In keeping with Grace's claims, the memories of girlhood actions of experience, feeling, enjoyment, fun and pleasure (*jouissance*) are ritual processes that can be understood as a reversal, annulment and extermination of structural terms (p. 175). Beginning with the predominant sensation of *jouissance*, the next sections are preoccupied with describing a variety of sensual modalities that re-enact these past experiences.

## Jouissance

[Baudrillard's] term 'symbolic' is related to the problem of affect – emotion, feeling, mood, meaning; what he termed ambivalence...a kind of affective interchange or dynamic intensity. The concept of symbolic exchange would therefore appear to be

an attempt to integrate the concept of social form with an expressivist concept of meaning, as an emergent process of the body (Levin 1996: 84-5).

In Discourse 1 – Home, an “expressivist concept of meaning” constitutes positive value judgements and emotions within what Levin (1996) calls an environment of escalating tension and arousal (p. 158-9). In the transcript narratives, the thymic category, or the vocabulary of feelings and emotions, generates joy, spontaneity and pleasure which I am calling *jouissance*. As N. explains in a blend of kinaesthetic feelings and of knowing: “*I feel as if it's one of the sources of my strength those experiences we had, because I knew paradise*”.

In semiotic terms it might be claimed that this theme establishes the positive axis of the axiology of nostalgia (Martin and Ringham 2000: 28). The values organised in the interests of specific ideology as the positive axis, constituted by experiences in a positive time and place, unfold and are denoted by positive terms. In this past temporality, the women once experienced a state of *fun* (*heaps of fun, lots of fun, great fun*) (connected with) *neat kids, a good time and a wonderful neat sort of life*. In the isotopy of the emotions, the past place is connected to *innocence, bliss, fun*, and what is *peaceful, funny, [I loved it], exciting, happy, and caring*. The isotopy of evaluative terms includes *the happiest time, spoilt rotten, lucky, in paradise, beautiful, wonderful, idyllic, magical, peaceful, free, simple, uncomplicated, really neat, freedom, adventurous, security, lovely, carefree, confidence, caring, being responsible, danger, honesty, truth, mischief and challenge*. “*You could have wars, we made gangs, then we'd be friends*”(G.)

Discourse 1 – Home also includes references to a poetic encounter with a world of aesthetics or intense beauty. As D's text (below) demonstrates, there is a

sense of being immersed in “the play of the world and seduction” (Baudrillard 1983: 139), an aesthetic of beauty, movement, wonder, sights and feelings.

*D. And the beauty that was there. I mean, there was um...I used to climb up the hill behind the house and I'd lie on my back and I'd see the sky and if you could.... Lay there...very quickly you'd start to think the earth was turning madly because the sky, the clouds were scudding across the sky, but of course it was the clouds that were moving and not the earth. And then you'd turn the other way and you'd watch the hills and I remember I'd watch these wonderful tussocks and the wind would take the tussocks and make waves with them and I'd watch.... Oh I could watch forever those, you know.... There'd be one wave and then the wind would blow and then the grass would go. The tussock would all blow one way and you'd see another and the shadow would pass and the depressing and the springing back and the gold lights and it was very beautiful. And I was always very aware, as a child, of the beauty of the landscape. Incredibly aware. You know the skies and the changing skies and the colours and the smells and that sort of thing. I was a very sensual child and very aware to the senses of the world and things like that (D.).*

The aesthetic of seduction concerns the construction of powerful invisible forces within which the active child is immersed. This effect is produced by the use of densely packed verb phrases joined by *and*. Mind and body blend as the girl experiences a sequence of activities, where she climbs, lies down, sees, starts to think, turns one way and then another, watches and experiences her own awareness. There is a reflection of both internal and external feelings: externally the surface of the girl's back sensing the surface of the hill, and internally feelings of awareness, awe and wonder at the surrounding visions and sensations. There is the kinaesthetic and proprioceptive feeling of the body turning in space and the sensation of the movement of the clouds creating the effect that the earth upon which she lies is *turning madly*.

The terms *beauty*, *wonderful* (repeated twice), *very beautiful*, and *beauty of the landscape* constitute the aesthetics of this experience. Time is suspended; *Oh I could watch forever*; and the conspiratorial “*you know*” twice draws the listener into a shared experience. The melding of the child with the force, sensation and beauty of nature is referenced in the transcript by the statement “*I was a very sensual child*”,

with the universal quantifier “*always* very aware” and the adverb and repetition “*incredibly* aware.” The magical reference to the *gold lights* introduces the dominant visual and olfactory senses which follow in *the skies, the changing skies, the colours and the smells*, and the indefinite reference to *that sort of thing*.

As D’s narrative makes clear, the listener is also drawn into what the child feels to be an awe-inspiring world by the very “vertigo of seduction” (Baudrillard 1983: 139); here producing proprioceptive experience. This is achieved through the sense of dynamic movement, altered state of consciousness and dizziness produced by lying and watching the clouds moving. In other women’s texts, this altered state is induced by *rolling up and down green hillsides*, and *flipping inside an old oil drum*, all movement that disturbs the standard equilibrium of sensory inputs and motor control.

In Cixous’ terms this discourse reflects the joy and pleasure to be found in *écriture féminine* or women’s writing, the construction of a territory that is “preceding prohibition and so has the potential to return us to paradise” (1990: 203). Cixous is talking about the paradise of the Lacanian Imaginary, which accords with the period when the child experiences the plenitude of being in a dyadic unity with the maternal body. D’s transcript re-enacts *jouissance*, reflecting the writing that Cixous says is “like emotion itself, like the thought (of the) body, the thinking body” (Cixous 1997: 64). Cixous’ magical world is where “we went without counting...each feeling a benediction ...[and] we suckled roots entwined in Nature. Suckled sweet bitterness...free and powerful” (p.184). Both Cixous and those aspects of the New Zealand women’s narratives assembled as Discourse 1 describe a territory of the imagination, where there is a passionate exchange of sensations, joyous emotion and

beauty. Furthermore, Cixous' *écriture féminine* and D's memories are both grounded in the physicality of the body. Cixous' observation in the citation below of contra-  
 "counting" reinforces how this kind of experience is of an other order from that of the economic.

We were evidently happy in another time and effortlessly....We did not compare "much" with "a little," "how much" did not exist, we went without counting, we knew how to take pleasure in the heavy as in the light, losing was a find, each feeling a benediction, each moment a master, each hunger a celebration of bread, when we supernaturally lived naturally. And no complaint, only marvellous curiosity" (Cixous1990: 184).

Julia Kristeva's notion of the semiotic is inevitably brought to mind by the pulsations, whirlings, spinnings, repetitions and rhythms of poetic language in Discourse 1 - Home. Kristeva is similar to Cixous in that she also draws upon the Lacanian Imaginary but her focus is to critique the structures of conventional linguistics. Kristeva dislocates the hierarchically dominant *symbolic* function of language (where the sign connotes meaning and signification) by positing the significance of the peripheral, disruptive and heterogeneous *semiotic* (in her idiosyncratic borrowing of the term). The signifying process as a whole is then understood as an amalgam of these two. She reiterates, for example, that a phoneme has both a symbolic and a 'fuzzy' semiotic function in language. It has an apparently distinct meaning as well as being "involved in rhythmic, intonational repetitions; it therefore tends towards autonomy from meaning so as to maintain itself...near the instinctual drive's body" (p.135). The semiotic, largely consisting of poetic language, is of another order than meaning and signification, most resembling the rhythms, intonations, and glossalalias prior to the acquisition of language. It is a category denoting the raw material of signification, dominated by the complexity of the primary processes constituting the maternal *chora*.<sup>2</sup>

The notion of heterogeneity is indispensable, for though articulate, precise, organized, and complying with constraints and rules (especially, like the rule of repetition, which articulates the units of a particular rhythm or intonation), this signifying disposition is not that of meaning or signification: no sign, no predication, no signified object and therefore co operating consciousness of a transcendental ego...[this is] a distinctiveness admitting of an uncertain and indeterminate articulation because it does not ...refer ...to a signified object (Kristeva 1980: 133).

Both Cixous' *écriture féminine* and Kristeva's *semiotique* critique the psychocultural western order of phallogocentrism by repatriating the maternal/feminine space that prefigures the Lacanian Symbolic Order.<sup>3</sup> As explained, to enter the Symbolic Order in psychoanalytic terms is to separate from the mother. Tapping into that maternal/feminine space however enables Cixous and Kristeva to generate a sense of jouissance, mobility and fluidity based on the dichotomies of sexual difference.

Cixous', Kristeva's and Baudrillard's theoretical approaches each have something to contribute in different ways to my analysis. The theories of the first two is based upon sexual and gender difference, (reflecting the code instigating value according to equivalence and difference) while Baudrillard's critique is not. In Baudrillard's terminology the phenomenon generated by the transcript narratives is not of the order of the Lacanian Imaginary, nor, as Grace points out, indicative of a romantic 'golden age' (Grace 2000: 18). Rather, Discourse 1 – Home echoes Baudrillard's reading of "the phenomenology of a sort of personal discovery, which repeats, in other dimensions, what might have been the primitive experience of emigration" (Baudrillard 1991:158).

Taking symbolic exchange as a radical point of departure for my analysis of these transcripts of nostalgia instantiates a fluid, embodied reality, or symbolic realm unable to be represented in a finite set of words. As argued, the application of a notion of symbolic exchange outside of the 'gift' cultures that Mauss describes is made easier if we understand how continuing qualities of seduction generate active signs,

meanings and challenges where objects are always ambivalent and not of the order of identity and difference (Grace 2000: 43).

In the next few sections I trace how the adult women recall the bodily jouissance of childhood in terms of smell, movement, trouble, spatiality and surfaces, all as bodily signs and activities. Although the following highlights individual senses as memory and imagination construct a narrative account, none of the senses exists on its own. One sense may predominate in a text, but all of the senses aid and abet each other to emphasise the multifaceted reality of this referential world.

## Smell

An intriguing aspect of the originary transcripts generating Discourse 1 – Home is how meaning comes to the body in the very immediate, specific and determinate mode of smell. The transcripts mention the aroma emitted by *pennyroyal* crushed underfoot, the smell of being inside a *honeysuckle* hedge and the odours of food: *hangi*, *sage* and *basil*. There are mentions of *the sea*, *salt*, *horses*, and *sea breeze and um fish*, *the smell of really crisp river water*, *the smells of the bush*, and *manuka and kanuka smells*. In addition, from *riverbeds* there are *gorse smells*, *broom smells* and *lupin smells* that specify *the smell of being there*, *the smell of such a good time* (G.). D. says: *it was sort of grasses and beech forest and gravel riverbeds and tussock, our old apple orchard and things like that*. Sometimes the smell of outdoors is taken inside: D. adds the school and chapel smells of (thrice reiterated) lilies, which cause her to - “ah!” - halt mid-breath.

*D. There was a wonderful sense of smell and flowers...lovely old buildings and the scents in the Chapel, you know, those wonderful – the smell of ah! – lilies, Easter Lilies, Christmas lilies at Christmas time.*

## Action

The social traverses persons and things; persons and things seduce and challenge each other, encounters are open and not prefigured by codified structures of meaning (Grace 2000: 42).

Following the dominant sense of smell, the sensation of kinaesthetic movement is especially salient in this discourse. In these texts there is a prevalence of participles that confirms an immersion in memories of girlhood activity. The wide range of lexical items denoting physical action includes: *rolling, sitting, swimming, jumping, galloping, riding, climbing, playing, going around, daring, sneaking, fishing, having fun, wondering, knowing, building huts, harnessing, exploring, blackberrying, bird-nesting, running around, fighting, learning, listening, looking, milking, pushing, rolling with laughter, loving, racing, laughing, playing – hockey, bull-rush, trolleys, sandcastles, tops, war, houses, hide and go seek, amazing games, fantasy games, elaborate games, created happenings, bring, catch, raid, shake, swim, pick, eat, push, walk, roam, mix up dog dinners, sweep huts, paint shells and stuff.*

## Spatiality

Surfaces and spaces are reflected in the women's re-enactment of ritualised play in, on, and with, the outdoor landscape in the texts *now*. In these rituals, sensations of space and the proprioceptive senses are significant, as multifarious dimensions of size intensify the ambivalence of the children's imaginative realm in events back *then*. Cixous' (1997) argument suggests that the human self consists of "tiny-little-bodies-in-a-big-cube-of-light" and that the parody of this spatial disparity enables the human person to accept that the immense is not overwhelming (p.22). This means having ways of interacting fluid enough to entertain the "imaginary possibility of taking a mountain in one's arms" (p.22).



I just saw another vision in Bonn: it was the tiny characters of Giacometti, they are 1 cm tall, they were exposed in a very big cube of light. What moved me was not the characters – if you had put them on a table they would have fallen to the ground like matches – it was the whole. Their smallness made the immensity. The immensity made them – immense, immensely small (Cixous 1997: 21).

The physical disparity between the research participants as adult women in the present and their memories of experiences as girls in the past became especially clear as each woman was being interviewed. In the transcripts themselves, the category of childhood includes many terms specifying an indeterminate range of spatial/temporal measurement. Some of the references were to “*a time when I was little*,” “*when I was little I didn’t grow*” or when “*there was everything a little girl could want*”.

The women’s memories of *littleness* include metaphors reflecting corporeal dimensions of body parts.<sup>4</sup> According to G., “*our little eyes were like saucers*” and “*little ears couldn’t understand*”, and Q. says, “*your little brain’s ticking over*”. Not only does the *little* girl have *little* body parts, but also she explores and inhabits internal and external places in a *little* world. R: “*It was like a little valley*”; G: “*we played in places that were very, very on the small side*”; Q: “*I lived in a little place called Pokapu*”; J: “*I had my own little space*”; G: “*You knew all the roots and the little hollows*”.

The child interacts amidst *little* objects. D: “*You’d eat a tiny little bit*”; C: “*her scrubbing brush was in the shape of a little ship*”; Q: “*we had little knick-knacks at Christmas*”; N: “*We used to make little dolls out of flour sacks*”. There are other people: *little* (people); C: “*I made friends with another little girl*”; G: “*We had little boyfriends from down the road who we played with*”.

Personal littleness is integral to rituals of play across a surface involving the *bigness* of heterogeneous outdoor spaces. G.: “*there was a sense of a big area of land you could cover...we’d ride around to the other big tree...a really big pine tree...it*

was like big cliffs"; K.: "there was a big mud flat"; R.: "Going to Kerikeri was a big excursion in those days"; M.: "you just accepted the world as one big place."

Ambiguity is heightened when the size differential is situated in the same sentence. F: "So here I am a little seven year old ratty kid, little kid in this big truck". The child in space and place has knowledge of spatiality including how to get under the surface of things which form a sanctuary:

*R: We had huge hedges that we used to hide in when we knew we'd done something wrong...it was such a huge hedge – prickles everywhere – we'd climb right underneath it, or we'd get under the house.*

The ambivalence of space is further amplified when the child's imagination draws upon Maori and Western mythology to generate a specific narrative embedded in the larger text of gods, families, giants and people.

*N: And there was this little island out at the heads. There was an island which is shaped like a sandcastle and in my imagination I always thought that this was a sand castle made by one of Manaia's children so there was this – um what do you call a whole lot of gods together, you know, like a family of gods. There was this sort of giant family living there when I was very little, as well as us, all the people who were at the Heads, there were eight or ten families that were in our little patch. Yeah, there was this giant family.*

## Surfaces

Other senses construct additional experiences of embodied knowledges concerning a sense of surfaces. While the asphalt skin being laid upon New Zealand roads in the 1950s represents a new world of commodity and commerce, G. charts these through a mixture of auditory and kinaesthetic bodily sensations, including pliability, expansion, heat and discernment.

*I can remember tar popping on the road when Matua road was made into a sealed road. You pop it with your toes on the way home (laughs). You could pop the bubbles...that's when it got really hot. It got hot enough to pop the tar bubbles...that was like a sign, when it's hot. And once we decided we'd try it with chewing gum but it didn't really work (laughs). A lot of feeling of bare*

*feet...like we were barefoot...there was the feeling of the ground under your feet and knowing it so well, like knowing the beach and you know where you could walk without sinking in and which bits to, how to get across the channels and which bit were sinky and which bits weren't and which was the lovely gluey clayey mud which was actually quite fun but you actually sunk into it...and the hard bits...then there's the little weedy bits which were quite hard usually unless they went sort of a blacky colour and that was the sign that it was going to get sinky.(G)*

Here memory and imagination first reconstitute the sound of the tar in the heat by repeating the *pop* and onomatopoeic *bubbles*. The girl plays with the skin or surface of the tar; its fluidity and lack of a fixed border allows her toe to move under the skin and pop the border/bubble. The woman's laughter reflects the remembered incongruity experienced when "*we*" experimented with new fluid surfaces in the heat.

The girl has knowledge about the surface of the beach, not through reading maps and manuals but through the sensation of her bare feet. The childlike grammar including *sinky* (twice); *lovely*, *gluey*, *clayey*, *blacky*, *which you actually sink into* are examples of how the child is reading the signs of the beach through bodily experiences of suction, sinking, encapsulation and escape. This recalls Freud's reference to the *heimlich* family "the Zecks" who were "like a buried spring or a dried up pond. One cannot walk over it without always having the feeling that the water might come up again" (Freud 1919: 223). The *unheimlich* family evokes an uncanny indeterminacy reflecting the girl's experience of ambivalent surfaces.

### **The Memory of Water**

Sensations of depth and immersion are present in girlhood memories of their familiarity with the waters of river and sea. As Toril Moi explains, in terms of Cixous' appropriation of the Lacanian Imaginary, such fluidity privileges the imagery of water by evoking "the endless pleasures of the polymorphously perverse child"

(Moi 1985: 116). “We are ourselves sea, sand, coral, seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves...Heterogeneous, yes” (Cixous 1975: 260/51). Moi alleges that “[f]or Cixous, as for countless mythologies, water is the feminine element *par excellence*: the closure of the mythical world contains and reflects the comforting security of the mother’s womb” (p.117). With some similarities to the Baudrillardian symbolic, Cixous’ evocation of the Lacanian Imaginary discloses a place of privilege, where there are no differences but only heterogeneity and fluidity.

Such fluidity is evident as G. (below) explains the significance of immersion in the sea by drawing upon kinaesthetic modalities of movement and suspension, as well as thought and vision. Although her visual senses are blurred it is *normal* for her body to be suspended in time and aqueous motility.

*G. A lot of time in the water. It felt like it was so normal for me to be underwater. Or the thought of not being able to stay afloat was just inconceivable. Underwater – a lot of time underwater – like diving down and looking underwater with eyes open and in the murk.*

## Time

G’s term *a lot of time* reflects a *normal* sense of temporal fluidity where time is unmeasured by conventional means. In her essay “Women’s Time” (1986), Kristeva critiques the patrilineal Symbolic Order organising western verbal communication for the way in which it objectifies and measures time purely in the interests of the Law of the Father.

It is thus that female specificity defines itself in patrilinear society: woman is a specialist in the unconscious, a witch, a bacchanalian, taking her jouissance in an anti-Apollonian, Dionysian orgy (Kristeva 1986: 153).

Kristeva argues that by relegating female subjectivity to sexual and reproductive functions, humanity has lost a sense of women’s time, the “repetition and eternity” of

“cycles, gestation”, “cosmic time”, “vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*” (p.191). From this perspective, Kristeva reformulates desire in a way that critiques the unitary subject of the psychoanalytic Symbolic. A lexical field registering “women’s time” could apply to the key words and phrases encapsulated by Discourse 1 - Home. In the following transcript text, immersion in the river means action with the verbs *pushing, raid, shake, run, catch* (in short phrases joined by “and”) and rituals of bodily movement that take place within a framework of whole days and seasons. This symbolic world generates time according to the requirements of the activity being undertaken. Summer consists of whole days spent immersed in, and living from the fruit taken from beside, the river. That this was a matter-of-fact ritualised performance is highlighted by the insouciance of the term “*of course*”.

*R.: We used to spend the whole day in the river...And we'd spend our day pushing logs all the way down the river and on the way we'd raid all the orchards and shake all the trees into the river and then we'd run downstream and catch all the fruit and of course that's what we lived on all summer.*

In the segment below, P. generates an awareness of time that is not linear nor future-focused but measured according to the seasons and the sun. References to time are linked to the indeterminacy of the flexible, child-centred play time it takes to perform actions: *we'd spend our day, carefree time, we lived on them all summer, we played all day, you lived the whole thing all the time, big adventures all day*. According to G. *we were allowed to go off in the morning and come back at night and no one knew where we were – didn't have to know where you were...it was like you just lived them, you lived the whole thing all the time. We just played and played and played.*

References to time and nature include black-berrying time, milking times, the time of the new moon, preserving time, the time it took to feed oysters and the time of the flood. In P's following text, the dense iteration of terms reflecting seasonal

changes in nature is authorised by what she *knew* and what was *allowed* in the food-gathering practices of her childhood.

*P. Well you knew, for me like, when certain flowers bloom I knew that was a certain season, or when certain trees showed certain changes. Well fruit trees, always I knew that was summer and due to be picked for preserving. Winter was the um like the willow trees used to be all straggly looking and the pine cones yeah the pine tree was always there but then there was a certain time when you're supposed to pick the pine cones because some were, they were green, they weren't allowed to be picked but when they popped open we were allowed to pick them for firewood. So that was another – then the totara berries when you were allowed to eat the red ones.*

## Sounds

As one might imagine from the range of activities undertaken, this is not a silent world. For the interviewer and aurally evident on the tapes, the inflections of female voices modulate as the women's memories re-enact the girl's voices. Strikingly, Discourse 1 – Home contains memories of the salient, gentle voice tones of O's Grandmother and her Grandmother's community. Indeed, all of O's nostalgia focuses upon *one single thing - the sound of my grandmother's voice when I was little. The sounds were lovely, they were soft sounds...she spoke beautiful Maori.*

As well as the auditory modality, the text repeats the kinaesthetic sense of movement through space and the instantaneous feeling of being taken by the hand. Here a memory of direct speech is embedded within O's own memory to lend continuity and substance to her recounting of the grand-mothering practices of her childhood community.

*O. I remember Nanna saying, she would say things like, "Well your kete's out there", and she'd say when we went to pick pipis, "just one darling, just one and then move". She didn't say, "don't pick more than one". And it wasn't just her, it was the old people around her, it was the people that moved around her that said the same things.... One lady came up and said, "Are you auntie P's grand-daughter?" I said, "Yes". She said "When I was a little girl my mother took me to your grandmother and said, we can't control her" and she said, "To this day I will never forget what your grandmother said. She took*

*me by the hand and she said, "Come darling, I'll take you over to my place - we'll fix it, we'll fix it."*

On the tape, O's voice changes, the pitch deepens and the rate slows to suggest a form of ritual where *Nanna* and *the old people around her* actively guide their young. It is a world of reciprocity where teaching and learning are shared and communities repay in kind, quite distinctive from the world of economic exchange and accumulation.

As Baudrillard recognises, Marcel Mauss (1954) has some important insights that are relevant here. Mauss' reading of the cultural phenomenon of gift exchange evokes an alternative principle to the law of value and political economy. He explains how the Maori process of exchange (such as we have just heard) is a relation based on ambivalence and autonomous exchange.

The *taonga* and all strictly personal possessions have a *hau*, a spiritual power. You give me *taonga*, I give it to another, the latter gives the *taonga* back, since [they are] forced by the *hau* of my gift; and I am obliged to give this one to you since I must return to you what is in fact the product of the *hau* of your *taonga* (Mauss 1954: 9).

The New Zealand anthropologist Joan Metge points out that the principle of reciprocity is vital in pre-contact Maori society and still exists as an obligation meaning sharing food, labour and support at *hui* (large gatherings).

The Maoris had no money, nor did they engage in trade. Goods and services that were lacking or scarce were obtained by gift exchange, i.e. by giving gifts in expectation of a return....[T]hey gave as generously as they could, for besides securing a better counter-gift, generosity ensured the giver's mana, always a primary concern with the status-conscious Maori (Metge 1967: 15).

In a Baudrillardian reading Discourse 1 – Home utilises nothing of a sense of individual identity, but rather a symbolic relation where everything has retribution, what Baudrillard (1993) calls the *reversibility* of exchanges, which abolishes the accumulation of value and power.

## Taste

The participant's transcripts reflect a realm that also promulgates information about food and taste, sometimes indeterminate. *We had those Maori lemons that are sweet half, sort of, like a lemon but they're sweeter (R.). Orange drinks with frosting they'd dipped in sugar around the edge, it was just wonderful (G.)* Gustatory sensation underpins reference to rituals around food, characterised by words and phrases denoting pleasure and plenitude.

*It was the same every picnic, which was traditional bacon and egg pie - bacon and egg pie, apple shortcake, apple shortcake. Then there'd be tomato sandwiches, that sort of thing. Big, thick slices of white bread not pre-sliced but you know slabs of butter and beautiful tomatoes (L.).*

In the following segment, N's talk about food invites the listener to experience the food producing and sharing rituals of a kind of symbolic exchange, in a place she calls *paradise*. In Kristeva's terms, "it is the taste of the sense of time" (1996: 22). It is a world counter to accumulation and capital where it is *hot and the holidays*. In N's remembered experiences of the internal sensations of going freely in and out of houses, *bliss* and safety around *benign adults*, these food references describe the ritual community sharing of resources of 'special' food gathered from the extravagances of Christmas, the garden, or sea.

*N. Because all the families either were related or knew one another well and we all went freely in and out of one another's houses and the parents did things communally...like, the women would all make um.... You know - they'd make tomato relish because the tomatoes would be going rotten and they'd and the kids would be given a little bit on a cracker to take to the women down the track for her to try to see whether hers was as good and she'd give you some to take up to your mother and there was all this to-ing and fro-ing all the time and the men would fish together. And the kids would be just left to roam and we could eat anywhere, we'd get fed wherever we went, we'd just, it was just the most lovely feeling of safety and all these benign adults around the place. Everybody was benign 'cause it was sort of hot and it was holidays and, you know, and everybody had chocolate biscuits in their cupboards from Christmas. It was just bliss, it was utter bliss, yeah. Um, and everything was*



*special. Like, you had special things at the beach that you had nowhere else in the year, like you had-Mum and Dad used to buy special food that we only had at the beach. Like we had this huge big tin of watercrackers and um, we had things like tinned corned beef which we never had at home...things I just loved and I can remember the food so vividly. That Mum used to set bananas in jelly and because there was no fridge the bananas used to go a bit brown and it was - ooh, I really hated that but, you know, yeah. And there were all these rituals, like everything was ritualised, and I think that one of the reasons it was paradise was because Mum and Dad were so happy here.*

## Names

Sensation and pleasures that stir up the imagination take refuge in the syllables of names (Kristeva 1996: 7).

In this world of multiple senses, the visual sense, which is so salient in most Western literature, is relegated to one amongst many. The most striking example of the visual however is K's text, which primarily employs the visual modality but also includes reference to space and movement. Most authoritatively and precisely, this text generates the visual re-enactment of a tour around a past world *seen* with the prescience of a fortune-teller.

*K.: I can see it - I can see Kaikohe as clear as can be, absolutely. I lived there a long time. I can see the trees, the walnut trees going up the driveway to the school, the swimming pool, 'cause that was very - the kindergarten (long time there), the Church, the Methodist Church, Scout Den, I can see them all. I can see the shops, I can see your Dad's shop, first shop, second shop, Johnson's Garden Centre, the Picture Theatre - with the long dark stairs we used to climb at the back and go up and watch the movies in the room behind Dad's office. Um - I don't see things like the College because that wasn't part of my life...the Aerodrome I see, um...Railway Station...the Rec., the Hall (where we used to have our dances) and the roller skating. Yeah, that to me is my nostalgia.*

The reiteration of the names of places that are familiar to me (the interviewer) throughout this narrative resonates with Kristeva's insights regarding place-names. She maintains that the name of a place, locale, landscape or city imprints "the narrator's involuntary memory with its sensual history, it takes on the real presence of

a human being” (1996: 99). K’s memory of her childhood experiences induces her to imagine the shapes and positions of streets and shops and spaces we walked together. For me, the name of our town, Kaikohe assembles the sensory experience of walking through the streets again as a child. As the various names of shops and places sequentially flow through the text so does the listener or reader. The name, *Kaikohe*, however draws together the disparate shapes, positions, streets, shops, stairs and buildings creating a sense of depth and space.

According to Kristeva, the repetition of the sonority and reuse of a syllable offers a past sensory experience that enables measurement of the distance between the sound of those names when we lived there and that sound now.

Childhood is a time when names offer us an image of the unknowable. When this image is betrayed by the reality of people and things, memory tries to recapture it through the sound that once filled our ears with wonder (Kristeva 1996: 7).

There are of course many placenames throughout the texts generating Discourse 1 – Home (in no particular order): *Pokapu, Otiria, Motuwai, Motutau, Moerewa, Mangamuka, Kerikeri, Waitangi, Waimate North, Taranaki, Stratford, Matua, Coromandel, Kaikoura, a small West Coast place, Sumner, Mission Bay, Pakaraka, Opononi, Auckland, Whangarei Heads, and Russell*. Kristeva explains how a significant name is like a balloon filled with oxygen: we only need to poke a hole in it, and our childish misbehaviour will deliver “the air of Combray [or Kaikohe], the scent of hawthorn blossoms [or honeysuckle], the rain, the sun, the sacristy” (p.7).

## Trouble

In the transcript texts, rituals constituting *mischievous* and *danger* make *trouble*. Although there is *security* and *safety* in this world, it is a place where *freedom* incorporates *daring* and *trouble*. As Butler writes about her childhood:

To make trouble was, within the reigning discourse of my childhood, something one should never do precisely because that would get one in trouble....Hence, I concluded that trouble is inevitable and the task, how best to make it, what best way to be in it (Butler 1990: vii).

In the following two segments, first Q. constructs a complicated sequence of events where *somebody with ten little fingers*, meaning herself, performs mischief and gets into “trouble” by breaking the seal and scooping out preserved apples so that the whole jar *went off*. The second account includes the knowledge of *dangers*, this time the challenge to the death with the invisible danger of electric power.

*Q. It's back to mischief again. I can remember Mum going to the cupboard and wondering why her apples were going off oh well somebody with ten little fingers had gone along and levered up the – probably with brother and you know taken a scoop out and put it back down and she couldn't make out how they – how all this fruit suddenly went off.*

*Q. You knew things; well you just knew there were dangers. What was another antic we used to get up to? Climbing the shearing shed, just climb up the sheep yards onto the roof but um you know there was no trouble getting up. I'm sure it must have been told only once, I'm sure I was only told once that when you had power coming onto the roof then don't touch the power lines, go under each of the wires then carry on round. We used to take mates up and show off that you could climb up.*

P. describes the mischievous ritual of wrapping marbles in dough to entrap a duck and reflects the incongruity of this from an adult point of view by laughing.

*P. I used to wrap marbles up in dough and show them so the duck will come along and pick it and it will get choked and then I used to clear its throat and think it was a big joke (laughs).*

N. and G.'s transcripts both express tension and physical trouble by including the ordinary verbs *climbing*, *doing*, *jumping*, *sneaking* with the more startling adjectives

*enormous, frightening, terrifying and daring*. N.'s repeats the key word *menace* three times and emphasises the notion of challenge by embedding direct speech into the penultimate sentence. G's text includes the childlike inflections of *like big cliffs* and *like you dared*, as well as her repetition of *house*.

*N. There was menace there – like Mount Manaia was menacing. There was menace as well – and there were challenges like climbing the highest rock at the beach. It was an enormous frightening terrifying challenge and some of us could do it and some of us weren't brave enough. And the older kids had all done it before and they'd stand on the top and say, "Ha, ha, ha, you can't do it!" – That sort of thing.*

*G. A lot of it was involved in doing things that were quite daring like jumping off the top of the shed, a sloping shed. You could get so you could actually jump off the front, which was the highest bit down onto the ground...and sneaking up to other people's houses from the beach on big ladders. It was like big cliffs – like you dared to see how close you could get to the house – you could actually touch the house.*

The complex and challenging rituals of stealing apples, negotiating shearing sheds, cliffs and rocks, and choking ducks all denote "how best to be in" embodied knowledges of trouble.

## **A Form of Social Relation**

As we have seen, the auditory texts creating the metadiscourse Discourse 1 – Home generate a world of symbolic exchange including a continual cycle of giving and receiving and reciprocity; the young gather for the old, the old teach food gathering and storing practices to the young. Significant key words, often nominalisations, include qualities of *humbleness, celebration, hospitality, and interaction*.<sup>5</sup> R. explains what the term *spirit of the valley* means to her:

*It's how the people lived here, how they share their food, their kai. When someone goes to the beach they take enough for the people that they gave to*

*on the way home, and it's usually the ones that are older than them. And how we were taught to, to get fish from the valley and from the rivers and to go down to the end of the point and get oysters and flounder and whatever. How we dragged the oysters back in a boat, filled the boat up and then dragged all the oysters back in sacks and Dad came and picked them up on the back of his truck and then we took them home and fed them and lived on them and that's how we had to survive at the time (R.).*

This emphasis on *hospitality* is very salient in Discourse 1 in keeping with Baudrillard's claim that problems of Otherness in "symbolic exchange" are reduced to a question of hospitality, rather than the "otherness of difference":

Hospitality represents a reciprocal, ritualized and theatrical dimension. Whom are we to receive and how are we to receive them?...The Other is my guest...a foreigner, a stranger, *extraneus*. And for this very reason, his strangeness has to be exorcized. But once he has been initiated in due form, my guest's life becomes even more precious to me than my own. In this symbolic universe there is no place for the otherness of difference (Baudrillard 1990: 141-2).

By scoping the various planes of smell, taste, movement, surface, sound and rhythm, the transcribed texts considered here constitute a system of social relationship that shuns both the order of identity and difference, and the economic. The smells of fish and sea, the taste of tomato chutney and the sound of Nanna's voice, are the surfaces and planes which describe exactly the ambivalent environment generating a Baudrillardian sense of seduction which stands in stark relief to the psychocultural present. The realm of symbolic exchange posited by Baudrillard is radically other to the contemporary economic realm of simulation and hyperreality, and is focused on reciprocal emotive forms including the cyclical flow of the gift.

Symbolic exchange is a form of social relation whereby the exchange of objects is predicated on the notion of a circulation of the gift. This cyclical process runs contrary to a logic of accumulation of wealth and the extraction of a surplus (Grace 2000: 42).

Symbolic exchange involves a continual cycle of giving and receiving so that that which is not exchanged, or is taken and not returned, imperils reciprocity and begins to generate power (1973: 143). Here, the 'gift' is something unique and irreplaceable,

which cannot be substituted because it has no equivalent. According to Levin, the gift is a social action not a sign; in its context it embodies its own meaning which is only how “the bodies of the giver and receiver have come to exist in relation to each other” (Levin 1996: 85). “It is an act and a process of imagination, which dissolves when the social relationship it symbolizes ceases to exist in the minds of those who experienced it” (p.85). The society of symbolic exchange reflects the affective part of social life, the feelings, or what exchange value excludes from intersubjective mediation of objects, a “reciprocal emotive form of sociability” structured by indeterminacy” (p.93). K’s long, complex sentence (below) not only reflects this reciprocal emotive form of sociability but also generates the sound of the phrase *Hillcrest Road*, “that once filled our ears with wonder” (Kristeva 1996: 7).

*K. My most favourite memory of Hillcrest Road is walking ten yards up the road and sitting on this piece of concrete gate post and waiting for Alan to finish his paper round because that was the last house he did and then he could stop and talk to me at the age of eleven and then he brought me this necklace and it was black and it had a bee done in diamonds and I thought it was worth a million dollars.*

The following segment discusses ‘swaps’, in which fantasy, reciprocity and rivalry construct an interplay of sensory experience and ambivalence in a ritual of symbolic exchange. The meaning of ‘swaps’ comes from memory of ritual that surrounds the joy of their beauty, the smell of new cellophane, the feeling of tins in one’s pocket, and the sight and feeling of *glitter angels* and embossment.

*G. We’d have an unusual collection of swaps; you’d swap such and such for you know. In tins, like your tin was really important what sort of tin you had sometimes you’d have two tins and you’d arrange them into their little tins, into your tins and carry them around with you like a wallet yeah. Some for your special ones; the flowers, the flowers and the arrangements and that. Some of them would have glitter; glitter angels were the absolute pinnacle of it. One glitter angel for ten flowers or something. Then you’d get Noddy ones and stuff like that. Some of them were sort of embossed, then you’d get little ones that were just on the edges that were the extras. Like it might be one flower that fills up. I just loved swaps. I thought they were so beautiful. The smell of them. I remember the smell, the way you’d get a new sheet in its lovely cellophane thing.*

## Discussion

In this magical world where memory and imagination evoke experiences of being immersed in girlhood, meaning comes through the body as jouissance, sensations, the gift and counter-gift, reciprocity and reversal, hospitality and aesthetics constitute a realm where people and things seduce and challenge each other and demonstrate the constructed nature of the binary of life and death (Grace 2000: 43).

The ambivalent and mutable is evident as K's minds-eye recalls the Kaikohe shops, G. negotiates the glutinous surface of the clay, and D. engages with the ever-moving golden tussock. There are tastes and colours, a sense of time marked by the seasons, a sense of embodiment dependent upon the smell of lilies or the denseness of hedges and the girlhood body moving, following, climbing, playing and jumping across the surface of the landscape. Nanna, *my sun, moon and stars* (S) has a voice that resonates across the sky. The duck that was made to swallow marbles encased in dough reminds us that the relation between the human child and the non-human bird means only fun.

By reading the research interview transcripts as reflecting the ambivalence of symbolic exchange one might claim that they signify a personal *rediscovery* of what it is to be human. Rather than the unified "I" of the Cartesian self, or Kant's transcendental, primarily centred ego, or any other codified structure the girls' existence can be regarded as an indeterminate capacity of orientation (Csordas 1996: 11). Subsequently the underlying thesis in this analysis brings to mind Merleau-Ponty's existential principle where the indeterminacy of perception constitutes a transcendence, which "always asserts more things than it grasps: when I say I see the

ash-tray over there, I suppose as completed an unfolding of experience which could go on *ad infinitum*, and I commit a whole perceptual future” (Merleau-Ponty 1977: 79).

In conclusion, analysis of Discourse 1 – Home reflects the girl-child in a world that actualises a sense of wholeness, pleasure and belonging for them. It also critiques contemporary western systems of semiology and economic and political exchange, and forms a juxtaposition to the pornographic machinery of contemporary capital, where girl’s bodies are seen in sexual and commodified imagery. In my analysis the transcribed texts critique such relations of economic exchange through memory and imagination, and they exemplify how narrative might stall time and reverse “production, time, economic exchange and their corollary, power” (Grace 2000: 43).



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The term “jouissance” is used here to mean joy/enjoyment, as derivatives of the French verb *jouir*. Hélène Cixous’ (1997) translator, Eric Prenowitz, describes how *jouissance* [although always a noun in English] “says with particular economy ‘to orgasm’ and ‘to enjoy’ (including the sense of possessing or having the use of)” (Cixous 1997: 113).

<sup>2</sup> Toril Moi (1985) explains that the semiotic is linked to pre-Oedipal primary processes collected in the *chora*, which is “neither a sign nor a position, but ‘a wholly provisional articulation that is essentially mobile and constituted of movements and their ephemeral stases...Neither model nor copy, it is anterior to and underlies figuration and therefore also specularization, and only admits analogy with vocal or kinetic rhythm’” (Moi 1985: 161).

<sup>3</sup> Despite both using the same term, the Lacanian Symbolic Order and Baudrillard’s concept of symbolic exchange are antithetical. It would be impossible to conceive of a category denoting Symbolic Order in a realm of symbolic exchange, because the latter is not governed by language but by ambivalence, where “[t]he social traverses people and things; persons and things seduce and challenge each other, encounters are open and not prefigured by codified structures of meaning” (Grace 2000: 42).

<sup>4</sup> Carolyn Steedman claims that the notion that the adult self contains a smaller self from childhood derives from the assumption that there is a *Bildung*, a wholeness in interiority, that will gradually assert itself and move itself forward from inside to outside the body (1994: 15). In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, this concept made a discursive shift from purely physiology to concepts of childhood, education and psychoanalysis, where the idea of the unconscious was formulated partly out of the “littleness, drama and interiority of cell theory” (p. 16).

<sup>5</sup> Nominalisation is a structural feature whereby any element or group of elements in a clause is made to function as a noun. Martin and Ringham (2000) explain that nominalisations are often formed from verbs which means they are expressing a process. The authors contend that one of the effects of nominalisation is to cause a discourse to be more abstract and thereby “enhance its ‘truth effect’”. The omission of agency also allows one to background (or even ignore) historical detail. (p.96).

## CHAPTER TEN: HOME-KILLING <sup>1</sup>

I knew the feelings of violent exile where I was, for where I was in this land I was rejected and disgraced (Cixous 1992: 195).

This chapter explores the specificities of the second metadiscourse of nostalgia which I have called Discourse 2 – Homekilling. Here Discourse 1 - Home is cut across and overwhelmed by regulatory and oppressive social structures draining the fun and *jouissance* out of life. As a meta-text, Discourse 2 is a collective re-enactment comprised of individual bodily and verbal memories of the child self generating a repertoire of feelings and emotions quite unlike the joyous ambivalence of Discourse 1. The work of this chapter is to analyse how selected extracts from the research participants' texts under the topic of Discourse 2 - Homekilling conform to specific stylistic conventions, as well as reading the practices by which they reflect that "[t]he body is a setting in relation to the world" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 303).

There are ten sections in this chapter. The first five focus upon the discursive construction of 'otherness' in Discourse 2 by looking at the oppressive social structures that have created women's memories of racial difference in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The second part consists of selected women's re-enactments of memories of being constituted in terms of the heteronormative regulation of gender and sexuality.

### Otherness

So, the whole of the 'West' writes the history of the Other, strives to bind the Other to that history through the effects of discourse on subjectivity, and thus to lock the Other in its masterly gaze (Venn 1992: 45)

The research participants' re-enactment of memories is situated in the 1950s, an era when authoritative ideology in New Zealand reiterated conservatism and

egalitarianism in an intensely monocultural environment. Post-war practices of “swamping” Maori (Belich 1996) through assimilation and integration, insinuated European monocultural linguistic and economic structures and forced Maori into European models of human life.<sup>2</sup>

Most saliently, Discourse 2 introduces culturally specific inflections establishing how the construction of the ‘other’, different from the ‘otherness’ of others, situates the girl-child relative to others. We encounter structures of identity and difference that situate the child within systems of social oppression and authority. At times the discourse reflects different experiences for Maori and Pakeha girls, but both cultures are subject to the dread of an antagonistic world which is both different from, and indifferent to, the symbolic realm.

In Discourse 2, the binary subject/object relationship upon which economic exchange is based, is given authority by the research participants’ memories. This reflects, in Baudrillardian terms, the modern transformation in western economies as economic value becomes based on sign value; “a mode of representation whereby positive values, positive signifiers, circulate and designate difference” (Grace 2000: 23). This transformation in the lifetime of the research participants results in a massive form of social control as burgeoning forms of the sign and commodity systematically proliferate positive identities in the interests of consumption. Normative structures (subject/object) differentiate Maori from European, feminine from masculine, superstitious from logical and sane from mad to replicate the code structuring exchange value and use value based on the logic of equivalence. As Grace explains:

Economic exchange predicated on this subject/object binary establishes a form of exchange that works through a code establishing value according to equivalence and difference. This parallels the structure of identity/difference in linguistic terms, whereby identity constitutes the positive or marked term and difference is the

negative or unmarked term: a binary structure that designates *the same or not the same* (Grace 2000: 10).

Foucault similarly recognises that modernity not only instigates the phenomenon whereby the arrangement of signs becomes binary, but also renders people in the domain of knowledge as objects of a hierarchical and normative gaze, making it possible to qualify, classify, and punish individuals (Foucault 1977: 184-5). These changes took place in modern Europe and her colonies, including Aotearoa/New Zealand. As Rose tells us, capitalism required a conceptual apparatus that authorised the management of workers so as to “constitute new sectors of reality and make new aspects of existence practicable” (Rose 1996: 102). Consequently, as I discussed in Part Two, the amalgam of discourses called ‘psy’ authorises and reflects the discursive shift to sign value in modernity whereby human life is generated in accordance with parallel positive identities and the imperative to differentiate ‘self’ and ‘otherness’.

Lacan’s post-Saussurean reading of Freud concerning the role of language in shaping identity exemplifies how the ‘psy’ discourse the participants utilise here mirrors the conditions in which it was invented. Lacan argues that the position of the ‘I’ within language does not denote the presence of a subject that pre-exists it, but produces the subject through differentiating between the ‘I’ and that which is not-‘I’. Identity is grounded in the ‘other’ which the child sees mirrored as it gains awareness of itself as a separate being (1977: 1-7). The child’s mis-recognition of their mirror image, the “flutter of jubilant activity” (1977: 1-2), prefigures the dialectic which is a precursor to language, social interaction and distinction. The end of the mirror stage signals that the child is positioned as the “I” in social situations, an “I” created by “the desire of the other” (p.5). With the subsequent acquisition of language at the oedipal crisis, the child also becomes subject to the Symbolic Order and grounded in a

Symbolic Other. This transcendental factor may be the notion of the Father or the Law or another ideological representation through which the psychocultural environment sustains authority (Lacan 1977). The psychoanalytic argument is, that the resultant excess, or what Freud calls the unconscious, is a mechanism which confounds the meanings made by the phallogentric Symbolic Order.<sup>3</sup>

### A Racial Feeling<sup>4</sup>

We now consider the effect upon Maori girlhoods as social regulation in the 1950s authorised liberal welfare reformism to augment policies of assimilation which as Metge argues was “[g]overnment policy until 1961, aiming at the complete absorption of Maoris and Maori culture into the dominant Pakeha way of life” (1967: 334). In the following section I draw on one of the six Maori research participants and we hear the perplexity engendered as O remembers how signs of *the Maori world* haunt her overtly European girlhood. In O’s case, being told by her *so European* mother that *we weren’t Maori* belied the *signs* relayed by her mother’s daily habits and dramatic reaction to culturally significant Maori rituals.

*O: Well we were jammed solidly between two worlds because we were living in a European world we had this feeling for our Nanna and from it gradually identified that as a racial feeling, something to do with something we didn’t have access to, but we kept seeing signs of in our family, little things. Like my mother was so European and one day I brought her home this beautiful bunch of Arum Lilies and I still remember she just about fainted with shock and she made me turn around and cycle all the way back to Otahuhu to put these damn things back in the swamp where I got them without explaining why! At 8 o’clock at night. Um, they bring death in the Maori world, and I didn’t find that out for many years... We were told we weren’t Maori but my mother had absolutely no idea how much of that world... like the tea towels were never washed with the washing, they were boiled in the kitchen and hung out separately – um – just a million little things.*

The essential primacy of the body in this account of nostalgia involves physical sensations of constraint (*jammed solidly between two worlds*), confusion, (*without explaining why*), disappointment (when *she just about fainted with shock*), and denial

(*something we didn't have access to*). O's narrative begins in kinaesthetic terms: *jammed solidly between two worlds, we had this feeling for our Nanna, a racial feeling*. Then the text splinters into European and Maori worlds, with the Maori world the excluded other that was invisible, yet abundantly apparent in her mother's household through *little things, just a million little things*. The embedded narrative of having her gift rejected by her European/Maori mother for reasons she was not aware of stresses O's confusion and bafflement in living overtly according to European values while being haunted by the Maori world.

O's narrative brings to mind Freud's (1919) essay "The 'Uncanny'" for the ways in which O's recollections conform to the process of repression; "that which ought to have remained hidden" – in this case Maori cultural practices – have "come to light" (p.241).

We can understand why linguistic usage has extended *das Heimliche* ['homely'] into its opposite, *das Unheimliche*; for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression...something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light (Freud 1919: 241).

In my Chapter Six, Freud resolved the tension constituting presence and absence by theorising a third term, the "canny/uncanny", that represents the very condition of this difference. O's memories of embodied experiences of confusion reflect the impossibility of transforming the relation between Maori and European, presence and absence, the familiar and unfamiliar. In a psychoanalytic reading, the radical incompatibility of Maori and European practices, rituals and codes might suggest to the reader that being *jammed between two worlds*, has the effect of repressing one of these worlds, here the symbolic Maori way of life.

Although Freud's formulation "canny/uncanny" might very well contest the 'unified consciousness' of the humanist subject, it is also complicit in smoothing over

or neutralising the very differences it structures by re-figuring the self's normative Eurocentric domain. Grace argues Baudrillard's point that a psychoanalytic reading focussing on the absence of the signifier [Maori culture] rather than [Maori] presence does not constitute critique because psychoanalysis remains transfixed by the codified logic structuring economic exchange. The manifestation of Maori culture as the lost object, the repressed, absent, unfamiliar or lifeless negativite, is still a productive manifestation, reflecting the form of economic value.

The bar establishing the signifier/signified remains, it is just that it is a bar of repression rather than a bar of equivalence; the signifier signifies in relation to the unconscious, even though the mobile and unidentifiable contents of the unconscious (signified) remain unrepresentable (Grace 2000: 179).

Kristeva points out that the instability and mobility of early childhood vocalisation, gesture and signification settles into, yet subverts the grammatical imperative (1984: 170). Baudrillard's argument is that psychoanalysis does not seize the critical possibility of this indeterminacy, "the residual precipitate of the symbolic operation" (1976: 229). Instead, psychoanalytic discourse generates the unconscious/repressed from within the very normative grammatical, semiotic, and axiological structures that instigate value according to the political economy of the sign.

Another account by O. enumerates her feelings generated by memories of her ancestors' grief at the loss of their land. In juxtaposition with Discourse 1 – Home, negative emotions reiterate the unjust systems of colonial power that led to the grief of her family. The gentle matriarchal authority glimpsed in the compelling auditory memory of Nanna's voice in Discourse 1 - Home now reflects memories and images in words where O's Nanna is constituted as powerless, struggling, isolated and bereft.

*O: Well, she and my grandfather were both of Maori descent and they had land in Haruru Falls which was missionary land and the point at Waitangi had been taken a long time ago - it was part of the very famous Busby purchase - but the area of it, which is where the hotel is*

*now at Waitangi, came up for sale. So they sold everything they had to buy back their ancestral land and then it was taken from them by Bledisloe as a gift to the Nation, so there was a big grief in my family because my grandfather died after ten years of struggling to get it back and my grandmother was left to bring up ten children and of course this was during the depression, so there was a lot of struggle, a lot of struggle to survive... And Nanna of course, never learnt English properly. She was living this isolated life, isolated from her children even, struggling to bring up the wee ones.*

The most striking aspect of this narrative, however, are key words and phrases denoting suffering, injustice and hardship: *land had been taken, they sold everything, it was taken from them, a big grief in the family, my grandfather died, struggling* (repeated four times), *my grandmother was left, isolated* (repeated twice). The text authorises a narrative account of phenomenologically real beings repeatedly experiencing powerlessness, struggle and pain.

O's talk differentiates according to the dichotomy historical/geographical and personal/relational. The personal /relational is found in the terms *she and my grandfather, their ancestral land, in my family, my grandfather, my grandmother, ten children, Nanna, she was living, her children, the wee ones*. The designation of space through use of the proper nouns (toponym) includes the place names *Haruru Falls* and *Waitangi* (repeated), which contribute to the sense of reality and truth heightened by references to significant New Zealand temporal and historical markers including *missionary land, the very famous Busby purchase, taken from them by Bledisloe as a gift to the Nation, the Depression*. There is also an internal network of temporal terms that establishes historical depth and the longevity of European rapaciousness. First there are terms denoting land *taken a long time ago*, then time is compressed as the account zooms in to talk about a contemporary reference point, *where the hotel is now*. We hear how O's grandfather's death occurred *after ten years of struggling to get it back, during the Depression*.



In recalling family history, O. uses negative terms, markers of time and historical and familial referents to underline the gravity and extent of her ancestors' debilitation and suffering caused by the colonial appropriation of Maori land. There are no sounds, tastes or smells or signs of sensory modalities in this sequentially organised narrative account of land deprivation. O's account is truncated and historically organised yet contains both personal and concise description that delineates social and economic dimensions of westernisation.

## Home Killing

While O's narrative includes the history of the displacement of her family by the state, the two accounts below focus upon the more intimate spaces of the family and community. In both the European mother in a household of cross-cultural marriage is positioned authoritatively in respect to western medical and religious discourses that authoritatively oppose the cultural practices of their Maori husband.<sup>5</sup> This pattern of authority results in cross-cultural conflict in which R's Maori father arrives on his horse like a romantic hero, whereas Q's Maori father's culture is *squashed*. The research participant's re-enact how ontological distinctions positioned their child self within deceit, inadequacy, confusion and conflict. In both accounts, these categories pinpoint the structures of sameness/difference of cultural practices regarding death. As Metge explains, the Maori custom is to handle death in the *tangihanga* where the *tupapaku* (corpse) lies openly instate at the *marae* (space used for community assembly), and where grief is expressed in "stylised wailing, speeches and tears" (1967: 61).

Having brought the conflict between life and death out into the open, they resolve it by the public expression of love (*aroha*) for the dead and for each other, and of faith in God's care (*manaakitanga*) for both. Every *tangihanga* is both a lament for the fact

of death and a re-affirmation of belief in the creativity and continuity of life (Metge 1967: 61).

In R's text there is suspicion and severe anxiety expressed in psycho-medical terms; *dubious, no cure, children did die, always paranoid, paranoia, being afraid, get a germ, some disease*. Otherness is reiterated by the terms; *come into the area, a bit alien, different values, mother's values, incorporate, the values of my father and of the community, they didn't meet, different value from her values, paranoid, paranoia, breaking your mother's wishes*. The narrative re-enactment of being in this environment includes remembering how the child had to *try to understand, incorporate [different] values*. R's memories of emotional, bodily and verbal experiences are lent objectivity by being internally generated now by the mind, so that references to intellectual processes of thought and knowledge – *I think, I understand, I know, knowing, I always knew* – convey conscious reflection.

The narrative is framed by temporal references to the past (*brought up, three days, before long, as time went on*) but R. also furnishes the impression that the times in which this occurred constitute an historical referent held in common with the listener/reader: *in those days, at that time, at that time it was a time when, it was a time of going to some of those*. This narrative technique introduces complexity about who knows what, who can guess what, and who understands what is being referred to. This very confusion makes it possible for the reader to freely identify with the times, meaning the 1950s.

R: [B]eing brought up by a mother that was Pakeha and somebody who had come into the area and married and so was a bit alien too, even though she taught at the school, at the local school, she had a whole set of different values because she came from the South Island as well. So, that was important too, it meant having to try and understand my mother's values as well as incorporate the values of my father and of the community as well, and sometimes they didn't meet. Mum was always dubious about a death. And how, when the people have three days on the marae they have the body in an open casket, and that was always, I think, a different value from her values and um – at that time we had, you know, a

*lot of those diseases that there was no cure for – there was no – they didn't have um – you didn't have injections like – we didn't have polio injections, we didn't have diphtheria and stuff like that and I know that children did die of polio and diphtheria and whooping cough and um some of those diseases and I know that was something my mother was paranoid about...being afraid that we'd get some germ or some disease because it was an open casket and I can understand the paranoia, especially now after having children and knowing how precious they are and um but, you know like, at that time it was a time when they were starting to inoculate children in the schools and it was a time of going to some of those – um – going to the hui on the marae. And knowing you were breaking your mother's wishes and that – that I always knew my father would be there before long to pick me up. He always arrived on his horse put us on the back, any one of us on the back and take us home.*

In this text, the only two examples of kinaesthetic sensation are found right at the end. Memories of her girl self's actions in defying her mother's authority are couched in kinaesthetic terms, acknowledging that although she was *breaking* (her mother's wishes), her father will reconstitute the fragmentation and *pick me up*. A universal quantifier stresses how her father *always* acted as a go-between, between home and marae, and supported R's attendances at hui, follows this: *He always arrived on his horse...and take us home*. As a result, the individualised blame for the child's dissimulation and her perception of cultural conflict concerning disease and death converges interracially, in the conflict between both parents of this nuclear family.

The next account also concerns cultural conflict around death, this time with the re-enactment of a few more kinaesthetic and auditory sensations. In Q's text, the kinaesthetic term implying a sense of extreme reduction, *sort of squashed*, repeats O's memory of being *jammed between two cultures*, although here it specifically relays the status of Maori language and culture in the 1950s. The uncompromising hegemony of Eurocentric policies privileging normative sameness is found here too, where although her father is Maori Q. identifies her family as *a European family*. Reiterating racist systems that depend on visual differentiation, the family is European despite that fact that *you could see* (Dad's Maoriness) because he was *not a fair Maori*.

*Q: I'd have to include myself as a European family, although Dad was Maori, and you could see it, but not – um – a fair Maori. And um – but everybody got on good. I wasn't brought up anything to do with Maori. Neither of us were – it was all European, in fact Maori was sort of squashed.*

In the following excerpt, processes of memory generate negative terms and emotions including *war*, and the uncannily ambiguous punning euphemism *home killing*, which situate Q's child self amidst continuous conflict between her Maori father and European mother (*I grew up with them – every time*). Q. stresses the propinquity between her home and the *marae* and powerfully evokes the auditory sense, the sound of the *karanga* on the wind, a cry which in turn generates her mother's negative talk. The use of direct speech heightens the force of her mother's words, "*shrills and screaming*", and the repetition of *ungodly*, *pagan*, *pagan*, and *condemning* (twice) act to drown out the Maori calling. The Maori side is resoundingly, violently and literally *cut off* through *the influence of my mother*. Here, the colonial-Protestant imperative is clearly individualised and interiorised in the maternal body.

*Q: When we moved to Te Reinga and we – to get from the house to the road you had to go past the Marae and I grew up with them. Every time there was a tangi at the Marae or something at the Marae there was a war with Mum and Dad over home killing (you might as well say). You know, instead of getting the meat from the butcher as you do now well they would go and bowl off a beef ... Well then we moved to another house – and if the wind was blowing in the right direction you could hear the women (it was, I know now) um – calling, when you approach the Marae you get, you know, the welcome – shrills and screaming as my mother used to say. But you'd hear this wailing and my mother would say "Oh there they go again" and she would give the influence of "It's um – ungodly, it's heathen, pagan, a pagan", you know – condemning – condemning that action. And um – they only visited the Marae a couple of times, they didn't – for dances really, and they didn't enjoy it at all. But I did put it down to this influence of my mother, that instead of combining the culture of her husband with the European culture, that it was – that Maori side was cut off.*

In the next extract to be analysed, Q. talks non-fluently just as she did at times in the previous text: *that um – I wasn't a – I was hopeless*. Here her non-fluent speech reflects her account of how uncoordinated (*hopeless, bloody hopeless, inability*) she was at Maori action songs, disclaiming the myth that Maori are natural at singing and

dancing, *although I have got a bit of Maori in me*. Q's practice of laughing when emphasising incompetence might be read as signalling the irony of her position. This memory of failure, however, contrasts with two claims for rational knowledge in her ability to withdraw from performing Maori action songs: *I learn very quickly, I learnt that very quickly*. Nonetheless there are evident changes in Q's behaviour here from that discussed in Chapter Nine under Discourse 1 – Home, where she was nimbly darting across the shearing shed roof under the power lines.

*Q: I learnt very quickly, although I have got a bit of Maori in me, that um. I wasn't a – I was hopeless at action songs. We used to have this old Maori chap that'd come along and take um – like Bible School. He'd have Bible School once a week and he'd do Maori action songs and singing and that, so being the newest at the school, or one of the younger ones at the school, you were put in the front row. Well I was sort of worked gradually back to the back row. I was bloody hopeless (laughs) my hands would go in one direction, my feet would go in the other and my mouth would shut up. So that wasn't my forte – I learnt that very quickly – and that was something I never carried on with, even though it seemed so easy. Oh no. But that was one memory that um, you know, I took right through life.*

Through Q's practices of memory which constitute the self of girl-childhood, we might also read her lack of coordination as something other than part of a damaged psyche or psychoanalytically traumatised body. The uncoordinated body could reflect Q's traumatic body memory of cross-cultural familial conflict. Coming from a home where Maori culture was vehemently denigrated and Maori was *sort of squashed*, it is not surprising that she is unable to move freely and with coordination when required to participate in Maori action songs. It is useful to refer to Casey's observance that traumatic body memory results in the fragmentation of the lived body.

This is the body broken down into uncoordinated parts and thus as incapable of the type of continuous, spontaneous action undertaken by the intact body ("intact" precisely because of its habitualities, which serve to ensure regular efficacy and regularity). The fragmented body is inefficacious and irregular; indeed, its possibilities of free movement have become constricted precisely because of the trauma that has disrupted its spontaneous actions (Casey 1987: 155).

## Superstition

The re-enactment of memories of racial difference between Maori and Pakeha cultures in the concluding text in this section focuses on the disparity between the research participant's Maori and European parents. The text presents an account of traumatic body memory, where regular practices of driving in a car or being inside the house are governed by the incongruence between her parents' superstitious beliefs. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines superstition as "Unreasoning awe or fear of something unknown, mysterious or imaginary, esp. in connection with religion" (p. 2084). In T's memories however, she distances herself from the cultures reflected in each of her parent's superstitious practices.

*T: Like Mum and Dad they had certain superstitions. The two big ones; we'd be driving home at 10 o'clock at night (this is after 6 o'clock closing), if it was a new moon or a full moon, I'm not sure which, we'd have to stop the car, we'd all have to get out and have a look at the moon we weren't allowed to look at it through glass. I mean we were halfway home; us kids had been looking at it all night through the bloody glass waiting for them to come out of the party. Yeah it was bad luck to look at the moon through glass. They never told us the things that meant good luck; it was always the stuff that meant bad luck. Mum's was a fantail or a bumblebee; if ever there got to be a fantail in the house, the fantail if it got into the house meant death. She'd just go into a mad flap if a bumblebee got inside, she'd be running round (that meant death too), and cutting or burning hair. We weren't allowed to burn our hair. Dad wasn't as superstitious as Mum was. That's the difference between Maori and Pakeha culture I guess.*

The recurrent use of spatial referents (*driving home, halfway home*), temporal connectors (*ten o'clock at night, after six o'clock closing, all night, waiting for them*) and present participles (*running, cutting, burning*) stress the movement and dramatic tension underpinning this narrative. The repeated use of *we'd, we were*, (meaning the whole family) and *us kids*, (meaning the children) positions the children in tension with the parents (*Mum and Dad, them, they*) and their different superstitious practices. Cynical commentary is provided by T's contemporary irony and negative feelings (*have to get out, we weren't allowed, bloody glass, yeah it was bad luck*) regarding

the habitual experience of being kids waiting for their parents to *come out of the party*. The narrative is cynical too about the practices the family performed to avoid *bad luck* in the name of European and Maori superstitions, the latter evaluated in particularly negative terms, *a mad flap, she'd be running round* denoting a pointless lack of control.

## Disaffection

This first section of Discourse 2 – Homekilling examines the nostalgic discourse of negative feelings and emotions emerging from the violation perpetuated in the interests of European colonisation, that is bodily re-enacted in the grief generated by being a child in a home where one is made aware of Maori/European otherness. Such experiences become interiorised and individualised, as key words and phrases construct the ontologies and epistemologies of liberal identitarian politics and formulate a raft of differences. Terms denoting lack of control, constraint, disappointment, incompetence and injustice situate the problem of cross-cultural conflict within the individual psyche of the child/woman and family.

Read in Baudrillard's terms, the memories generated in the research that focus on incongruence between Maori and Pakeha cultures in the 1950s reflect a discourse pinpointing "the othernesses of race" (Baudrillard 1990: 124). Baudrillard contends that the colonial ideology's determination to eradicate the Other leads to the burgeoning of racial differentiation and discrimination, when the Other becomes merely different, and yet dangerously similar (p. 133). The research narratives reflect how the radical Otherness of Maori was gradually brought into alignment with western structures that annihilate Maori Otherness by realigning Maori in terms of Maori/European difference, through processes of "inclusion and exclusion,

recognition and discrimination" (p.128). Relativity, comparison and difference generate 'otherness' within the coded form of identity/difference, which instantiates the (linguistic) subject and the (economic) object of a totally different order to the otherness of symbolic exchange.

Baudrillard's claim that "[w]e are living the psychodrama of otherness", refers to a state where the absence of the other means that otherness is now simulated, reiterated and differentiated along a single scale of values (p. 127). Thus the very intimacy of homogeneity and side-by-side relationships encountered in this section provoke the modern partitions and paraphernalia of racism: "This is the moment when the inclination to keep the other at bay comes into being" (Baudrillard 1990: 129). Although, as Baudrillard argues, the biological claims of racism are known to be unfounded, the codes underpinning racism reflect the logical temptation to fetishise difference that sits at the heart of every structural system. He asserts that "when it comes to the management of otherness and difference, the idea of a well-tempered balance is strictly utopian" (1990: 129).

The political and ideological critique of racism is purely formal in that it tackles the racist obsession with difference without tackling difference itself *qua* illusion. It thus becomes an illusion of criticism bearing on nothing (Baudrillard 1990: 131).

In this view, we must consider that racism will never be countered by 'dialectical' theories of difference but will continue to be an immanent, viral, and everyday reality.

## Gender Melancholia

And why when the Word started to recount its history, there was already in the voice of narration stress on misogyny, and why there is no memory without this poison (Cixous 1998: 133).

[T]o have a body, a body made emphatic by being continually altered through various forms of creation, instruction...is to have one's sphere of existence contracted down to the small circle of one's immediate physical presence. Consequently to be



intensely embodied is the equivalent of being unrepresented and ...is almost always the condition of those without power (Scarry 1985: 204).

Throughout this chapter, nostalgic discourse has been seen to reiterate structures of equivalence and difference that hierarchically privilege one category of racialised subject over another. The concurrent preservation of heteronormative sexual and gender classification too, means that sexual and gender roles are also fiercely adjudicated within the structures and paradigms of monoculturalism. The discourses of Protestant Christianity lend considerable religious authority to these racial and heterosexual imperatives. We have also seen how othering produces the feminine maternal as a figure to be blamed for her inadequacy. As feminist critique has always claimed, western ontologies equate alienation from the feminine and the maternal body with being 'human', a standpoint which makes feminist theorisation of girlhood both problematic and necessary.

In this section, I consider how the research narratives' verbal re-enactment of negative terms, feelings and actions of girl-childhood also objectify the dualities of sexual difference and gender identity. The three texts analysed in this section generate a repertoire of negative feelings and emotions around normative heterosexuality. In Butler's Foucauldian approach, this might be called "the 'girling' of the girl", as

the girl is "girded", brought into the domain of gender and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But the "girling" of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm (Butler 1993: 7-8).

By reading the interview narratives as a kind of embodied performance, we might note the re-enactment of kinaesthetic, auditory, proprioceptive and indeterminate, but habituated and gendered acts and modalities. We shall see how the combination of emotions, feelings and thoughts construct the specific psychocultural bias infiltrating the nostalgic self.

### Girling “the model daughter”

J.’s memories divide up parental expectations according to gender difference in a narrative text punctuated twice by laughter, which has the effect of emphasising the incongruence of the terms *clean*, *clean and quiet*, *clean and tidy*. The first part of this text contains key words and phrases categorically sorting the “I” that she wanted to be, *being happy*, *being a kid*, *being able to be how I was*, from the “not-I” that her mother wanted her to be: *perfect*, *a model daughter*, *clean* (three times), *quiet*, *academic*, *pretty dresses*, *seen and not heard*, *ribbons in your hair*, *succeeding*, *being top*, *couldn’t drive cars or get dirty*, *a pretty little girl*.

*J: My parents eh? Really strict and unfair. How they treated me, how they treated my brothers. What was okay for boys and what was yeah different expectations for girls and for boys and for the eldest too I think. And the having to be perfect kind of stuff. The model daughter.*

*K.C. What does that mean?*

*J: Clean (laughs) – clean and quiet (laughing) achieve and academic yeah. Pretty dresses – mainly clean and tidy. Ribbons in your hair. And succeeding – being top. Seen and not heard stuff eh? And different rules. Yeah, just society I guess different rules for girls and for boys.*

*K.C. How were they different?*

*J: Different times you had to be home. What boys – boys could go out, girls couldn’t after dark (pauses) even down to driving cars. Girls couldn’t drive cars or get their hands dirty eh? ...I’ve not got a lot of memories of Mum and I doing lots of stuff. I’ve got lots of memories of her, like when I did really well, like I was a showpiece sort of stuff. Like suddenly I was important. It seemed like the values were really different. All the things that were important to her weren’t really important looking back. What was important was just being happy really, just being a kid, just being able to be how I was and not have to be something I wasn’t – a pretty little girl. Like she didn’t want me to achieve academically, like they didn’t help me academically, neither Mum nor Dad (but Dad was really busy). If I*

*had homework I remember sitting in my cold, cold bedroom at my writing desk and the fire was going and I can just see my brother and Mum and Dad laughing and joking and I wasn't allowed to sit by the fire. I could come out when I'd finished my homework; it was like that was the less important thing.*

*For Mum unless someone was coming to have a look at us then it was important. It didn't matter how well you'd done unless people knew. Awful eh? Oh I feel bad just saying that. I've thought about it lots. That's being real honest. I know she came to the beach but she doesn't like the sun. I can't remember her being, throwing a ball; she came, but she didn't like the beach very much. Like she was there eh? She was in the tent. It's not her I remember running on the beach and showing us how to put a bait on a hook and all that sort of stuff. She didn't like doing it. She was keeping Dad happy, making sure he got his meals on time and his shirts ironed and his – she worked hard too, she went to work, she worked really hard. He expected her to work hard and he was tough as.*

*K.C. What do you mean tough?*

*J: He expected her to be up there at the business all day and running home cooking dinner in half an hour and then back to mind it on Friday night but she never challenged him and that was how he was brought up. Its funny like Mum was the religious one and yet he's the one that's got real values. Like the honesty and valuing people whereas Mum's is tied up with religion.*

*K.C. In what way?*

*J: You must, or you should, or you will and you do and you – but for Dad it's Dad, it's just his nature, it's just his nature, it's part of him to be like that (Pause).*

In J.'s experience, parental strictness and unfairness is attributed to gender and position in the family, and the nominalisation of *expectations* increases the 'truth effect' of this claim. The more subjective phrasing, *I guess, I think* also lends credence to the allegation that parents police the different gender expectations of society.

J. further divides the text according to memories of the different values and behaviours of her mother and father. Her mother is reflected in negative terms denoting hypocrisy and passivity: *it didn't matter how well you'd done unless people knew, she doesn't like the sun, I can't remember her throwing a ball, she didn't like doing it, she was keeping Dad happy, she never challenged him.* The terms connoting Dad include positive attributes of activity, *toughness* and *real values*. However the text changes slightly when the reader encounters Dad's expectations of Mum. Dad's status is echoed in the kinaesthetic term *tough*, while Mum's effort to keep Dad happy

is densely reiterated with the repeating terms; *she worked hard too, she went to work, she worked really hard.*

Embedded in the middle of the text is what might be called a 'Cinderella' discourse (describing how one child is relegated to an inferior position in the household) which generates immediacy and visual imagery in the present tense, (*I can just see*). The temperature difference between J.'s *cold, cold bedroom* and the lounge where *the fire was going*, heightens the opposition between the girl's excluded status and her parents' and brother's happiness (*laughing and joking*), warmth and inclusion. In J.'s memory of this, she repeats terms concerning her mother's hypocrisy. This section leads to the direct first person kinaesthetic statement highlighting the struggle J. has to articulate this judgement: *I feel bad just saying that.*

In this account, Mum's values reiterate religious authority (therefore are not part of her essential self), whereas Dad's values are listed positively in psycho-scientific humanist terms: *it's just his nature* (repeated twice), and *it's part of him*. J.'s iteration of behaviour and values includes explaining how mothers colluded in gender injustice in the 1950s and 1960s, and how maternal expectations were unrealistically shaped by religious discourse. Maternal expectations prioritised 'keeping up appearances' whereas paternal values, having come from a 'natural' source, are more 'authentic'. This suggests a humanist feminist viewpoint which is echoed in the complexity of patriarchal structures in the 1950s; Dad has good values regarding other people, but not à propos Mum. Mum works hard at keeping her husband happy and shaping her daughter according to idealised models of femininity. Despite the fact that J. knows her mother submitted to her father, J.'s feelings towards her mother include negative feelings of guilt, resentment, anger and disdain, whereas the toughness and calibre of her father are something J. continues to value. In short, J.'s re-enactment of

memories of grievance, resentment and frustration at gender differentiation itself constitutes one of the “various authorities ...to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect” (Butler 1993: 7-8). The selected images nudge the reader to sympathise at her childhood plight and the injustice and resentment that “girling the girl” inflicted upon her.

We can read J's text in accordance with Butler's terms of reference where these negative feelings constitute the domain of abjection. Butler utilises psychoanalytic and Foucauldian theories to argue that the subject is shaped by normative and identificatory processes through the interpellation of gender” (1993: 8). In J.'s account we see how the process of assuming a gender is linked to one's sense of identity and to the discursive means whereby heterosexual authority enables some identifications and disavows others, designating what Butler calls the abject. In Butler's terms, the formation of gender within an “exclusionary matrix” generates the domain of abjection, constituted by those whose presence forms the exterior to the sphere of the ‘subject’. In Butler's explanation of the masculine/feminine dichotomy, anyone not aligning with psychocultural gender norms finds themselves in a site of dreaded identification against which normative practices determine what “qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (Butler 1993: 3). Butler particularly critiques Freud's founding “heterosexual matrix for desire” and the costs associated with full identification with hegemonic imagos of masculinity and femininity, the child and adult subject.

This being a man and this being a woman are internally unstable affairs. They are always beset by ambivalence precisely because there is a cost in every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications, the forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but which we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely (Butler, 1993: 126-7).

Butler claims that subjectivity is the result of normative processes of specific citations and performative functions, that situate the person in specific discourses. Concepts

from speech act theory, of “citation as performativity” and the “performative act”, presuppose that the subject is constituted in and by discourse. In this argument, a performative act is not intentional on the part of an individual but works by drawing upon and reiterating a set of linguistic conventions that have traditionally bound certain kinds of historically sedimented effects (Butler, 1995: 134). For the purpose of engaging with J.’s text, this poststructural explanation, which explains ‘human life’ in accordance with ‘discourse’ that binds the girl to gender ‘performance’ in keeping with psychocultural mores, seems compelling. Let us consider this kind of explanation by looking at another two further sets of memories of childhood.

### **Feeling Very Sorry for this Little Person<sup>6</sup>**

If J.’s memories of abjected girlhood urge the reader towards a sympathetic stance, the next two texts provide a clear alignment with sites of “dreaded identification” (Butler), by re-enacting the painful memories of childhood. They were selected because their memories on the occasion of the interview provoked an externally evident manifestation of interiorised pain in the form of tears. In each case the weeping accompanied phrases reiterating memories of the women’s perceived differences from other children and families. The texts situate both women’s child-self in a family where their mother is identified as different and where they are without a father, a state which in the 1950s constituted heteronormative ‘otherness’.

E.’s account begins with a long complex sentence which serves to generate the polyphony of time and space. The complex sentence structure joins short phrases with conjunctions *and*, *like*, *so*, *because* and *like* to substantiate the claim that E.’s mother *was a very different sort of person*. Half way through this we hear the statement *I had no father because my father died when I was five* affirming the solo status and

lifestyle of her mother constituting her childhood *different to anybody else*. This is followed by reference to the difference of E.'s family home because it was an *institution*.

E: But certainly my mother was a very different sort of person.

K.C. Oh, tell me about that?

E: Well, she was a Theosophist. Well, um, do you know about Theosophy at all? No? Well, she was a member of the Theosophical Society from the time she was sixteen until she died in her 80's and the Theosophical Society is a Society which looks at all different Religions, like, they have, their motto is "There is no religion higher than truth", so she would be investigating things like Buddhism and Sufism and all the esoteric Eastern Religions particularly and reading about them and discussing and she was also you know practising yoga and vegetarianism, sort of in the 1950's and 1960's, at a time when it wasn't at all done and the fact that I also had no father because my father died when I was five, meant that my family was very different to anybody else that I knew, plus, from when I was an infant my parents ran a convalescent home, so that I lived in what was really an institution, um, not a normal family home. Like, there were always, like the home was shared with the patients plus we always had a live-in housekeeper, so there was never the kind of family life that other people have, so it would always be different.

K.C. How did you imagine other people's family lives were?

E: I had one family that I had a close friend in and I used to stay there and go out on outings with them and I just realised I think that it was very different (laughs) - bit tearful, (weeps) - because it does, you know (laughs) that's what happens - but yes, the fact that what I had was not the same. And we never had the sort of social interaction other families had, partly because of no relations and I realised later that in fact I think my father's family more or less ostracised my mother and him to some extent. I believe, although I have no proof that my mother was pregnant when she was married and um, members of my father's sort of more extended family didn't even know that he was married or had children.

The structure of the text includes making oppositions of *normal* families versus *my* family. Normal mothers and families are valorised, whereas her mother was *a very different sort of person, a Theosophist, a widow and then a solo mother*. Normal families had *social interaction* whereas *I lived in an institution with a housekeeper and patients*, never had *social interaction, had no father, [she believed her] mother was pregnant when married*, her parents were *ostracised by the wider family*. References to the time-frame of this text, including her mother's life in Theosophy and loose references to *sort of in the 1950s and 1960s, when I was five, and from when I was an infant* show E's attempt to stress how her mother's differences were important in a specific historical era.

The inclusion of both laughter and tears together with the physical acts of talking and intellectualisation all in the last paragraph is significant in this text. These acts generate the non-specific predicate *I think*, to encourage acceptance of what follows: *I just realised I think that it [meaning her family life] was very different*. Read as a specific bodily practice, E. not only physically manifests her sorrow by weeping, but also heightens the impact of this by placing the act of tears within parenthesis of laughter as well as herself labelling the extent and phenomenon of her crying, *a bit tearful*.

The other text to include the bodily act of crying generated by the imagery constituting memories of childhood comes from I.. Here, I. also comments on the experience of seeing herself as other or alien to self, which Casey claims is an essential feature of embodied existence.

This essential otherness originates in the limitations of our physical being that leave us with a sense of inescapable contingency; the automatic functioning of our bodies that consistently goes on without us, but which implicates us in anything that happens to our bodies (Casey 1987: 158).

This text manifests the technique of 'seeing myself as a child' which is common to specific types of psychotherapy, as part of the semiotic of self reflected in subject/object paradigms of 'psy'. I.'s use of the phrases *it's like looking at another person*, and *feeling very sorry for this little person* reiterates how she engages with memories of her child self.

*I: I missed out on I think, just normal you know, encouragement, love, affection, that sort of thing. Um – I wasn't getting that. Um, my, my um, beginnings were not altogether um average or normal probably, you know, as most people would see their beginnings. I had to carry a lot of the, you know, the baggage of my mother at that particular time and I guess I was – Yeah, that made me different in terms of the other children. I think she was always ashamed of the beginnings and so I was part of the shame....I just thought there was something wrong with me....My mother was prepared to give me to her sister and brother for adoption....Went to bed every night as a child (it's like looking at another person, feeling very sorry for this little person) every night I went to bed and I would cry. Every single night I would sob – get under the blankets – (it's making me sort of feel a bit – you know – (weeps) – but, that's what I would do and every second um weekend we would go to my*



*grandparents, my father's, my step-father's (that I called my father) my stepfather's home, for a family dinner and um.... we would come home and I used to pretend that I was asleep so that I would get carried inside so I could have that. Hmm – that's, that was the whole of my life and nobody knows it.*

In the section of text where I. sees her child self the terms re-enacting her memory of long established crying (*I would cry, I would sob*) are made more compelling by the material and physical production of this re-enactment. The memory of how habituated this weeping is is stressed by the temporal terms, *every night, every night, every single night*. The memory of what she *used to pretend*, in order to be held, contrives a poignant shift through time *that[is], that was the whole of my life and nobody knows it*. She corrects *that is* to *that was* but returns to the present continuous tense with *nobody knows it*.

Jessica Benjamin is distinguished by her feminist approach as one who attempts to blend critical theory and psychoanalysis. For my present purpose, Benjamin (1997) lends insight into psychoanalytic developmental theory that generates an explanation for the significance of (what is in I.'s text) the physical sensation of being held, or "early two-body experience", as the precursor for an ontology where representation emerges from the signifier/signified, subject/object experience.

Containment, holding, recognition, affect attunement – for the maternal activity that is necessary to form the somatic sense of self and to perceive and think about the me and not-me environment; in other words, to become one's own container, able to own effects rather than be overwhelmed by them. The mother acts as an outside other who is able to help the subject to process and tolerate internal states of tension. The first form she assumes is that of concrete physical other, whose holding and breathing contain the child, whose nourishment stimulates and soothes (Benjamin 1998: 27).<sup>7</sup>

The mood of I.'s text, (read according to psychoanalytic categories) emphasises the shame, sorrow, isolation and pretence accompanying the differences perceived by being unwanted by her mother and not part of a heteronormative family.

These three women's texts collectively re-enact the negative structures for "girling the girl" within which women remember being positioned in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1950s. Feelings of resentment, anger, frustration (J.), deprivation, isolation, shame, sorrow (E. and I.) reflect liberal humanist feminist and psychotherapeutic discourse. Psychotherapeutic categories of control/lack of control manage the violation which occurs in narrative accounts such as this including tears and laughter, which may be analysed in terms of the *ressentiment* that motivates liberal or radical oppositional feminist discourse. We might read all of the texts in this chapter in critical feminist poststructural terms, namely Butler's Freudian/Foucauldian reading of melancholia.

Butler's work on melancholia in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) theorises the way in which 'psy' discourses lend themselves to the topographical stability of an internal world made up of the self and its various parts. Butler's central insight is that our "passionate" attachment to subjection – "I would rather exist in subordination than not exist"(p.7) is founded in the emerging subject when the conscious and the social merge and the infant forms attachments to those on whom they depend. This act, according to Butler, conditions and regulates the means of our subjection.

Through a Foucauldian reading of Freud, Butler formulates the ways in which psychic and social norms that install the dynamic of desire and reflexivity, characterise psychoanalytic representations of melancholia. She argues that these discourses themselves overlook the fact that the psyche is interiorised by melancholia, and that melancholia itself constitutes the topographical tropes of the interiorised psyche (p.170). She does this by utilising Freud's work and applying Foucauldian ideas, which together define the social and the psychic as consolidated within dynamics of power.<sup>8</sup> What is important here is that the incorporation of attachment by

identification means that the lost object constitutes the ego because it continues to haunt the ego. Hence, the melancholic internalisation of the lost object that makes it possible to give the object up, also psychically preserves the loss at the same time as it establishes a mechanism for refusing the loss itself, a mechanism generating gender identification.

What ensues is a culture of gender melancholy in which masculinity and femininity emerge as traces of an ungrieved and ungrievable love [hence] gender itself here is understood to be composed of what precisely remains inarticulate in sexuality (Butler 1997: 140).

In Butler's argument, melancholia is not only part of a psychic economy but is also part of the mechanism of regulatory power. In other words, melancholia, emerging from the dissolution of the mother/child dyad, is both a means of internalising an attachment which is barred from the world, and a means of psychically setting up a pattern whereby the socio-cultural can be understood as organised through specific forms of foreclosure. We have seen in the research participant's texts analysed under Discourse 2 that psycho-cultural processes generated by memory organise gender according to the Lacanian 'I' and 'not-I' framework, foreclosing gender identification according to sameness with or difference from the masculine. Following Butler's formulation, the process of losing an other or an ideal (self, mother or family) presupposes that the loss is compensated by "the interiorised ideality of conscience." (p. 197).

An other or an ideal may be "lost" by being rendered unspeakable, that is, lost through prohibition or foreclosure: unspeakable, impossible to declare, but emerging in the indirection of complaint and heightened forms of conscience. That power is internalised by the social/discursive regulation of psychic life (Butler 1997: 196).

To counter Freudian explanations of melancholia as being internally driven, Butler argues for a model whereby melancholia is constituted by an amalgam of psychic *and* social processes. An example of this is found in her utilisation of the concept of a

trope that appears to work as a “tropological inauguration” or “founding moment” of the subject.<sup>9</sup> In this process, the psyche turns against itself in a self-reflexive process instigated by the conscience (religious discourse), melancholia (medical discourse) and self-reproach (legal discourse). This process constitutes the self as other, simultaneously creating alterity and taking the self as an object and selfhood as subjectivity. The process is discursively driven because in Butler’s formulation the subject is always a linguistic category and identity is only ever understood through language. In this reading, the terms, categories and names that are part of the self-reflexive process position the subordinated subject. Consequently, power is both exerted on and assumed by the subject as a constitutive act. In answer to the question of liberation discourse and identitarian politics – *Who or what am I?* – the social-political language of self-reproach fulfils the psychic desire for subjection and the subjection of desire.

Might it be argued that the girlhood-self in the Discourse 2 - Homekilling constitutes melancholia? With the iteration of speech and memory, the body, that existential ground of self-processes, organises self-processes through which, and in engagement with the interview process, the women objectify their own lives and produce the self-awareness that generates this meta-discourse. Applying Butler’s formulation to describe the psychic-social constitution of Discourse 2, the prohibition can be read as grief at the act of losing Maori culture, and in gendered terms “the grief of my confusion, impotence, exclusion, deprivation, shame, resentment” and so on. This grief then produces the ‘I’ as ‘other’, which through the self-reflexive process is constituted and regulated by the discourses of the law (self-reproach), religion (conscience) and melancholia (psycho-medicine). The representation of this might be “sorry you can’t return” (to childhood), simultaneously producing the self as other, as

tragic and suffering. The compulsion of this process, founded as it is on the social, psychic and political imperative for subordination, produces social regulation.

The very naturalness of the association of these psychoanalytic terms with nostalgia belies that they are socially and historically produced and laden with signification most in keeping with nineteenth century, psycho-medical and romantic discourses. Although Butler's formula turns the fixed signifiers into a more active reflexivity, creating the possibility of movement and an opening up of the logic of subjectivity, this act of Freudian/Foucauldian revision itself consolidates difference over sameness and revitalises the binary function. This in turn forecloses the ambivalence of the symbolic realm in Discourse 1 that these women so delighted in.

As Grace argues, Butler's notion of performativity continues to work within the subject/object, identity/difference and signifier/signified conventions centralising psychoanalytic theory and the Foucauldian notion of power (Grace 2000: 60-69). This critique of Butler substantiates Grace's assertion that the code underpinning the feminist recourse to psychoanalysis, semiology or deconstruction is entrapped by the historically situated structure of economic exchange. According to Grace, Baudrillard claims that the dichotomous construction of male and female is itself an ideology barring symbolic exchange while bringing about "the order of identity.... Sexual ambivalence is reduced by a violent instantiation of the biological organs (presence/absence) as the codified reference for sexual identity" (Grace 2000: 34). In this structural formulation, equivalence and difference is asserted within binarism with reference to what Baudrillard calls "the phallic exchange standard."

This biological anchoring – this notion that the finality of the biological genital organs creates the inalienable basis for the apparently ensuing structure – enables the structure (Male/Female) to become confused with the privilege granted to the genital function (reproductive or erotic)...the Phallus becoming the absolute signifier around which all erogenous possibilities come to be measured, arranged, abstracted, and become equivalent (Grace 2000: 35).

Grace's investment is in how in Baudrillard engages "the symbolic to critique the order of (a phallic identity)" (p.37). She argues that feminist theorists following a project of 'sexual difference' are inevitably trapped within the phallogocentric dichotomous structure of identity/difference.

## Discussion

How can we ever confront this new violence if we prefer to eradicate even the violence of our own history? (Baudrillard 1990: 85).

The primary task of this chapter is to systematically examine the second discourse of nostalgia by investigating how it utilises specific structures and sensory modalities. The shift from the last chapter to this one traces a move from joy to melancholia, from ambivalence to binary opposition, from Baudrillard's concept of symbolic exchange to critique of the Lacanian Symbolic Order, and provides a pivotal point of orientation in my investigation into nostalgic discourse. The transformation from re-enacting one's embodied status as a child in a joyous symbolic realm to being a melancholic child in an antagonistic world connotes a distinctively psychocultural reorientation. The relation between Discourses 1 and 2 highlights how women's memories of structures of western culture in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1950s lower a conceptual grid over the embodied existence of the symbolic realm. Discourse 2 – Homekilling cuts the former diverse range of ambivalent sensations almost literally down to a restricted range of kinaesthetic re-enactments known by the vocabularies of 'psy' as trauma, lack of control and melancholia. As well, the *jouissance* of the symbolic highlights the negative state of Discourse 2 – Homekilling.

Baudrillard contends that the juxtaposition of two disparate discourses is a critical technique. In these terms, the vital factor about the symbolic realm of

Discourse 1 is how it acts to critique its radical other, economic exchange. As Grace points out, the symbolic has

the ability to throw into relief the interrelated nature of the institution of the economic object and the construction of the linguistic subject. [Baudrillard] uses the notion as a device to present a theorised, critical interpretation of the problem at the heart of our post-modern age: the codified ideological underpinnings of economic value and the mode of signification, and how this codification makes possible relations of power (Grace 2000: 18).

The interview texts achieve exactly this close alignment of discourses which are radically other, in itself a powerful critical indictment of the “codified ideological underpinnings” (Grace 2000: 18) of the version of the contemporary construct of political economy generating their own memories. This alignment has the effect of constituting anteriority and posteriority and echoes the nostalgic paradigms beginning our historical exploration of nostalgia. As Ricoeur (1967) submits regarding the Adamic myth, Jewish thought produced transhistorical unity through adjacently situating the innocence of the Garden of Eden and the malediction of the fall. The Adamic text attains depth by stringing together that which is both contemporaneous and unable to be contemporaneous. In my case the New Zealand texts make what appears to be an ‘earlier’ state (Home) end once the ‘later’ state of Homekilling begins. The sense of textual depth so generated heightens the positive qualities of experiences of symbolic exchange in Discourse 1 – Home, by placing them in juxtaposition with social forces that violate these same positive qualities and energies in Discourse 2 – Homekilling.

The anteriority of Discourse 1 belies the fact that these two discourses are not always narrated in strict succession but are at times commingled. The overall impression however is that, like the Adamic text, Discourse 2 does not succeed Discourse 1 but loses it. In fact, although the individual women narrate the childhood symbolic realm and the realm of oppressive structures discussed in this chapter in

very close proximity, Discourse 1 – Home is ultimately the antecedent discourse which is a referent for whatever follows. As with Baudrillard and the ancient Jewish writers, the important factor is to utilise this positioning for premium critical and political impact.

In the symbolic realm, to use Baudrillard's expression, emotional, bodily and verbal experiences are re-enacted and spoken of in memory terms evoking the girl-child's immersion in the spatiality, temporality and sensations of her prior cultural home or *nostos*. In Discourse 1 moods, actions and attributes are ambivalently constructed in relation to what occurs in Discourse 2. In the latter, the negative takes form through an expulsion and negation of the dichotomously asserted positive, generating difference and equivalence, rather than ambivalence.

In Discourse 2 expulsion and negation, or the forms constituting sameness and difference, are given greater objectivity by being relayed through a reduced range of sensations than that found in Discourse 1. In Discourse 2 there are no smells or tastes; only a few sounds, albeit extraordinary ones, are re-enacted. There is also a marked preponderance of ironic laughter, tears and non-fluency as their girl-self is positioned negatively in relation to others.

This analysis is commensurate with the claim that the interviewed women are interpellated into the structural encoding of otherness integral to the discourses of 'psy'; including humanist psychological constructions of nostalgia (Davis, 1979; Lowenthal, 1986). For the Maori participants an inculcation of the sameness/difference repertoire is premised on the otherness forming and informed by the increased intimacy of post war European/Maori contact, and for all the women there are realignments required by the economic, racial, ethnic, sexual and gender dictates of modernity.



This modern conceptual apparatus is distinct from the otherness of symbolic exchange found in Discourse 1 – Home, where the other was not situated in oppositional, equivalent or comparative, terms, but elided by ambivalence. Grace explains that “[d]ifference’ within the coded form of identity/difference instantiating the (linguistic) subject and the (economic) object is of an entirely different order” (p. 83). She argues that the structural logic of difference systematising the social order aligned with sign value constitutes a phallic identity that displaces and replaces every ‘other’. In Discourse 2 – Homekilling, we can discern how memories generating the Maori/Pakeha, masculine/feminine combinations in Aotearoa/New Zealand construct a discourse organised according to racial/ethnic, gendered, ability and class distinctions: “the othernesses of race, of madness, of poverty” (Baudrillard 1990: 124).

Highlighting the semiotic and axiological terms of this engagement serves to emphasise the psycho-cultural bias defining Discourse 2. The research participants’ texts throughout this chapter conform to stylistic conventions that instigate value according to equivalence and difference, where memories of violation reflect the antagonism of structures of racial and gender difference. Violation is assuaged by what Baudrillard calls “the melodrama of difference” (1990: p. 84) constituted by the listener/reader’s sympathy, shock, or moral indignation. Totalitarian phallic and racist structures that govern and are governed by the economic and political economy perpetuate malevolence as they are simultaneously absolved from responsibility for the pain inflicted.

Reading this chapter in Baudrillardian and post-phenomenological terms disputes the hegemony which would seek to conserve the relation between Discourses 1 and 2 by situating the research participants in a psychological space where the “I” is

constituted precisely by the loss of the positive realm. By noticing how Discourse 2 – Homekilling utilises sensory modalities together with discourses of ‘psy’ to explain feelings and memories of conflict, home killing, loss, and change, has heightened our awareness of the neutralising effects of psychological discourse. We have also noticed how eradication of the social processes of symbolic exchange found in Discourse 1 – Home obliterates the ‘reality’ of social and embodied ambivalence by fixing it within a codified form. In the next chapter we encounter how the interviewees narrate the present day, the *now*, which can also be read as the space where nostalgia encounters globalisation, simulated value and commodity capital.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cited from Q.'s transcript, p.11, this heading not only generates its own punning valorization but also alludes to Jean Devanny's (1926) New Zealand text *The Butcher Shop*.

<sup>2</sup> As Te Awēkotuku's ironic contextualisation of her childhood memories reminds us, discourses of national intent meant that post-war Maori and Pakeha lives were 'blended' to an unprecedented degree: "Integration. Having Maori and Pakeha live side by side, with goodwill and purpose, as they had so diligently fought side by side in the Second World War" (Te Awēkotuku 1998: 73).

<sup>3</sup> Some theorists utilising psychoanalytic discourse insist that Lacan's description of the Mirror Stage and the Imaginary which it inaugurates erases the maternal and, in the interests of feminism, that it is 'the feminine' that constitutes the other (Moi (1985), Grosz (1993), Irigaray (1991), Butler (1993).

<sup>4</sup> Cited from O.'s transcript, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Jenny Coleman and Tricia Laing, make the point that the colonising imperative positioned European women in New Zealand as "agents and subverters of empire", as well as being "committed to 'civilising' a savage people and /or converting 'heathen souls'" (1998: 4).

<sup>6</sup> Cited from I.'s transcription, p.25.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin's solution to the self/other paradigm is to postulate a third term, intersubjectivity: The early two-body experience is seen as crucial to the way that representation emerges intersubjectively; specifically representation is mediated through the evolution of the transitional space, which includes not only the fantasy space of "alone-with-other" but also dialogic interaction...when we consider language as speech between subjects, we modify our understanding of the move from body to speech...a space of dialogue potentially outside the mental control of either or both participants...the "third term" (Benjamin 1997: 27-8).

In a Baudrillardian approach, this is best read as reflecting a contemporary transformation in the mediation of reality rather than, as Benjamin suggests, subverting the conventional Lacanian paradigm with the elucidation of a "cocreated yet independent relationship of two subjectivities"(Benjamin 28 n.5). The 'inter' of the term "intersubjectivity" combines neutral differences, generating in a simulated form the self/other differences of psychoanalytic developmental theory, ultimately based on the original Lacanian symbolic father or phallus.

<sup>8</sup> Butler investigates how Freud differentiates between foreclosure and repression, with foreclosed desire being that that is rigorously barred, subsequently generating the subject through a kind of pre-emptive loss. The heightened conscience and self-beratement involved in this process are identified as one of the signs of melancholia, which Freud calls 'the condition of uncompleted grief.' Butler contends that the foreclosure of certain forms of love indicates that the melancholia that grounds the subject signals an incomplete and irresolvable grief, and that melancholic identification is central to the process whereby the ego assumes a gendered character (p.133).

Unowned and incomplete, melancholia is the limit to the subject's sense of *pouvoir*, its sense of what it can accomplish and, in that sense, its power. Melancholy rifts the subject, marking a limit to what it can accommodate. Because the subject does not, cannot, reflect on that loss, that loss marks the limit of reflexivity, that which exceeds (and conditions its circuitry). Understood as foreclosure, that loss inaugurates the subject and threatens it with dissolution (Butler 1997: 25).

Butler reads this loss as "the loss of the loss", the loss that cannot be thought, owned or grieved, the loss of the ability to love, "the unfinished grieving for that which founds the

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subject". In this view, melancholia is both an attachment which substitutes for an irretrievable attachment and that which continues the "tradition of impossibility" belonging to that very irretrievable attachment (p. 24). She cites Freud's text *The Ego and the Id* (1923), where a lost object (the irretrievable) is replaced by identification. Freud claims that this kind of replacement "has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego"; "it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those" (pp.28-9).

<sup>9</sup> See page 3 of Butler's text, where she draws on Nietzsche's account of how power assumes a psychic form constituting the subject's self-identity.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: HOMESICK IN HYPERREALITY

When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared (Baudrillard 1995: 77).

Through close critical phenomenological and semiotic readings, the last two chapters have explored in detail how the research participants re-enact their memories of childhood experiences. Those chapters reflect upon how women's re-enactment of deeply embodied memories of childhood reveal some aspects of a type of symbolic realm (Discourse 1) followed by the foreclosure of that realm (Discourse 2). In this re-enactment, values of the Baudrillardian symbolic are privileged over, but then lost by, oppressive structures of signification and economic value that anxiously install rules, barriers and the antagonistic conventions of identity and difference.

To conclude investigation of women's nostalgia in contemporary New Zealand, we now consider the topics extracted and summarised as Discourse 3 – Homesickness. This is indeed where “nostalgia assumes its full meaning” (Baudrillard 1995: 77). The analysis followed in this chapter is slightly different from the former two because, in addition to the characteristics of Discourse 3 – Homesickness, this chapter engages with all three. This allows us to consider the interaction between the closely read ‘memory discourses’ in Discourses 1 and 2 and the narrative of Discourse 3, grounded in the

present. Accordingly, in this chapter research on women's nostalgia in New Zealand is temporally and spatially situated in a 'postmodern' framework.

In the first section of this chapter, the texts are positioned in the present day, here and now. This is followed by two sections addressing narratives that reiterate the participants' deeply felt experiences at returning home to the landscape of their childhood. For some of the women this is to their ancestral home and the status of *manawhenua* – which Bishop explains as “Maori people whose whakapapa is rooted in the local area ...responsible for the mana of that area” (Bishop 1996: 262). Section four focuses on the current revival of extinct or vanishing cultural forms in the attempt to, as Baudrillard would argue, escape the 'de'culturation of the virtual. The last two sections explore the ways in which two Aotearoa/New Zealand women re-connect to the memory of the symbolic realm in certain direct and embodied ways, and presents reflections on the significance of Kristeva's theorisation of re-volt.

### **Constructing the 'here and now'**

Memory is a dangerous function. It retrospectively gives meaning to that which did not have any. It retrospectively cancels out the internal illusoriness of events, which was their originality (Baudrillard 1997: 30).

Discourse 1 – Home presents women's memories of experiencing a type of symbolic exchange that evokes a constant sequence of reciprocity, an ambivalent space of

embodied activity and seduction, or the play of appearances. In this milieu, which may have been a marae, in a small town or at the beach, presence and absence, positivity and negativity are holistically blended. In Discourse 2 – Homekilling, memory re-enacts negativity that takes its form through expulsion and negation against the dichotomously asserted positive. One becomes female or Maori or illegitimate within dichotomous structures that reduce and re-arrange the ambivalent dimensions of symbolic exchange to set up the orders of racial and/or gender identity. In this last present day discourse, we become party to narrative accounts where the research participants at the present time are positioned within the contemporary hyper-real western economic and semiological structures.

Discourse 3 – Homesickness appeals neither to the authority of childhood memory nor to imagination (as did Discourse 1), but is clearly situated now in the contemporary world at the time of the interviews. Culturally and historically the texts read here are situated in ‘postmodernity’, the current era where human life in the west is predominantly structured in accordance with the globalised economic model which Baudrillard analyses as driven by sign value and simulation. Discourse 3 reveals how New Zealand women are situated amidst western forms of media, advertising and communications technology and concomitantly a space where hyperreality facilitates particular forms of social and economic organisation. In the terms of Baudrillard’s argument, by existing in the era of the Internet, McWorld and instantaneous global satellite communication, the research

participants are inevitably situated within hyperreality. As Grace has pointed out, this is a realm where signs *are* the real (p.84).

This last discourse is conspicuous for revealing the voice, intellect and narrative practices of adult women evoking recent actions, reflection, sensations, imagery and thought. It should come as no surprise to us that here we encounter the narrative voice of the present day. Rather than drawing upon memory, nostalgia here asserts the authority of the thoughtful adult voice in the practice of what is essentially a modern discourse. The logic privileging the present upon which modernist discourses float, is persuasively critiqued by Baudrillard.

[Baudrillard's] theoretical works critique the productivist logic common to the major discourses of modernity: production itself, power, economic value, meaning, representation, the subject, identity, nature, desire, sex, sexuality, knowledge, the real...are, in different ways, relentlessly predicated on the ineluctability of presence, of increase, on the inalienability of existence in the positive, *against* the negative, the destructive, the absent (Grace 2000: 142).<sup>1</sup>

Discourse 3 – Homesickness manifests presence, the contemporary era, the here and now in a number of ways. Firstly, there is a grammatical shift to the present tense: *this is still part of your life (N)*. Secondly, there is widespread use of the key words denoting temporal proximity: *now* and *today*. Thirdly, the key markers of childhood are replaced by terms of adult personhood including the terms *as an adult; a mother; as a grandmother; parents; as grandparents; my work*. Other adult terms specify age and the passage of time: *it being my fifty-fifth birthday on Saturday, I have quite a period of my*



*life that I can look back over that someone young doesn't have (F); and You are a product of how you grew up (N).*

The next section presents how the adult women's reflections on what is now absent, the qualities that make Discourse 1 – Home so compelling; a world of immediacy and enchantment, now complicated by contemporary phenomena. The texts go on to juxtapose and ultimately vitalise the relationship between all three discursive fields.

### **Re-entering the Realm of Symbolic Exchange : Homesickness (1)**

In this section and the one following, the participants' texts are read against the type of symbolic exchange which Discourse 1 constructs them experiencing as children. The predominant characteristic of Discourse 3 is the assertion of things Maori. It is predicated on Discourse 2 – Homekilling, which includes the semiological and economic displacement of Maori under European colonisation. Maori immersed in symbolic exchange lived on the basis of their singularity, exceptionality and the irreducibility of their rites and values, a culture so radically alien to the West it could not liken or oppose itself to European culture in the way that European could to Maori. This changed as western structures polarised individuals, as European and Maori, Pakeha and Maori, white and brown New Zealanders, and notions of identity and difference (being the same as or different from) proliferated.

In recent analysis, the principal political and personal forces ostensibly governing this relation have been grounded in bi-culturalism where one is positioned according to the duality of Maori/Pakeha, with each term deemed equal in terms of liberation and thus of human rights. In Grace's words:

We are all different, we can learn about these differences, we can discuss and negotiate these differences and through this democratic process produce policies that are acceptable to all. This implies that there must be a universal that transcends all differences and which is ultimately productive of a point of agreement...a vision of plurality ...commensurate with [Baudrillard's] critique of sign value (Grace 2000: 92).

Baudrillard's theories of the current climate of hyperreality recognise Maori and Pakeha identities as simulated cultural differences generated and regulated for consumption. "The Other is no longer to be conquered, exterminated, hated, excluded, or seduced but rather now to be understood, liberated, recognised, valued, 'coddled', resurrected as 'different'" (Baudrillard 1990: 89). Maori identity today denotes commodity and corporation, and facilitates a culture of economic, linguistic and cultural revitalisation endeavouring to redress years of colonial injustice and partake in New Zealand's global economic base. Accordingly, sacred Maori signs are hyperrealised: the *koru* and the song *Pokarekareana* designate Air New Zealand. The *haka* is the pre-match 'war dance' of the corporatist national rugby team the All Blacks. Things Maori are asserted globally in a world of cultural authenticity and 'differences', masking the fact that Maori as Other "a form of 'otherness' that is indeed irreducible, neither comparable nor opposable" (Grace

2000: 89) has disappeared forever. The structure of opposing power relations fomenting cultural critique, or bi-cultural politics, is both passé and simulated. It is a strategy whereby commodified western culture holds sway by asserting differences when the Other or the otherness of other cultures has been transformed into sign systems to ease the movement of merchandise and the flotation of capital.

Discourse 3 is striking in its assertion of key words and phrases whereby the Maori participants discuss Maori people and customs and use Maori language, verifying how Maori women focus on linguistic practices in *coming back home* (P.) to the place where they experienced girlhood. The narratives mention specific *kaumatua* and *tohunga whakapapa* (experts in memorising and conveying *whakapapa*) who relink and authorise connections between a *whanau* (family) and the *hapu* (sub-tribe), from which they have been alienated. The *kaumatua* reiterating *whakapapa* 'back home' is an expression of *ahi ka*; that is, they are 'keeping the homefires alight', thereby drawing a distinction between those who remain and those who leave.

The research participants' narratives also focus on practices that include regular attendance at *whanau* reunions, and tending the graves of *tupuna* (ancestors). The discourse narrates a re-connection with the past world of childhood, but it also generates a sense of adult leadership and participation within a community, in order to provide links between past and future generations. For Maori this includes acknowledging that generations, one's ancestral dead, still exist in the present day.

In this way a commitment to things Maori also concerns a spiritual dimension. Accompanying the return home is access to spiritual guidance from traditional sources and the cultural elaboration of spiritual imagery substantiating *manawhenua*. The texts make mention of appeals to the spiritual guidance of *tupuna* to lend authority to the participants', (often quite recent) immersion in a Maori worldview. By referring to the more prestigious 'thinking' rather than 'feeling' modalities, these accounts seek to convey the vigour and prestige of *whakapapa* and ancestral power. At the same time, in each of the Maori women's texts, the practice of sustaining future generations through grandmothering seeks to restore what past generations knew about the old ways of reciprocity and symbolic exchange. T. says that she and her husband understand what they are doing as *fulfilling our role as parents, as grandparents, so that our kids will follow through*.

The three following accounts reiterate how for Maori, experience is understood as a union of body (*tinana*) and *wairau* (spirit or soul). As Metge explains, "[t]hose who die physically live on in the spiritual world and in their descendants" (p. 61). R. speaks of the guidance of her *tupuna* in discourse uniting ideologies of New Age (*soulmates*), Christian (*guardian angel*), and corporate business management (*motivation*) thinking, through the modality of kinaesthetic imagery that 'does things' and 'motivates' her: *I've got soul mates that guide. I have a special guardian angel that's always there and I guess that*

*guardian angel is tupuna and they're there doing all these things to me (laughs) ...it's like a motivation thing...I guess it is a spirit.*

S. talks about her Granny in kinaesthetic and visual terms: *I always feel she's not far away you know. I mean there's something there – seems to be my guiding light – I just feel she's still around, still showing me, what to do – you know.*

O. places the authority of this spiritual guidance beyond the reach of western authority: *I also had some incredible spiritual experiences, which were beyond medical science to explain.* Some source of traditional power is a presence constantly felt to support and motivate the re-entry (into their *hapu* and into Maoridom) by women who grew up in a Maori-denying culture.

It is possible to read this commitment to return as simply reiterating existent traditions. As Metge explains the Maori concept of moving into the future with eyes on the past reflects *whakapapa*, or the knowledge of genealogy. Seen in these terms, the research participants are maintaining still vibrant traditional epistemologies and ontologies where it is standard practice to understand that “the past is not dead and gone but very much alive and relevant to them where they stand in the present” (Metge 1967: 70). By enacting a physical connection or reconnection to one's particular *iwi* (tribe), *hapu* (sub tribe) *whanau* (family), *tupuna* (ancestors) and *uri* (descendants), the women commit themselves to the Maori worldview. Returning to the physical landscape of ancestors situates one within the *mauri ora* (or life force where everything is animated),

and the *ihi*, *mana*, *tapu* and *wehi*, indicating awe for the psychic and spiritual authority of the sacred spaces. Within this framework, Maori generated rituals of symbolic exchange whereby the *taonga* (the treasure given) was, in Mauss's terms, "closely attached to the individual, the clan and the land; ... the vehicle of their *mana* – magical, religious and spiritual power" (Mauss 1954: 8).

However, what Discourse 3 reveals is that this powerful, embodied and spiritual commitment to reconnecting with the symbolic Maori world is traversed and ultimately obliterated by western discourses. This complicates the participants reconnection in two ways. Firstly, some of their talk continues to reflect Discourse 2 – Homekilling, or the loss of the symbolic realm, which tells how postwar Maori were severed from the Maori symbolic through processes of assimilation and integration. Cut off from *whakapapa* and who they were as Maori, the girls were compelled to live outside their tribal area. Secondly, the 'return home' is complicated by an awareness that today's 'reality' has changed.<sup>2</sup> These two connected streams are explored in the following sections.

We begin with discussion of the first group of texts that reflect the loss of the symbolic realm. For N., *it was an aspect of me that was very suppressed, my Maoriness*; Q.: *When I got married I had nothing to do with anything Maori*. In T's text, returning to her ancestral land goes a part of the way toward redressing the loss and alienation generated by not being steeped in local Maori knowledge and not being able to read the

'play of appearances' governing protocol. (The case at issue is to do with controversy over selecting the place of burial after a death).

*T.: We had broken the protocol by taking one of theirs away back up North. And so we really took that to heart, which is what we should not have done. We should have come back and challenged it – I feel now. Because we've lost a lot of years away from here. Had we come back and spoken to that Kaumatua and put things right again um we would have been back here a lot sooner than we have now.... We lost a lot of years through ignorance – through not um not being tika [strong] not coming back and standing up for ourselves. That's what we should have done. But we're doing that now – so yeah that's the main thing... fulfilling our role as parents, as grandparents, so that our kids will follow through... and it's such a neat area – and you feel that, you know that yeah – so it's all here. This is where it's all at. The people, the openness – um the welcoming. You know relations that we would have missed out on if we'd stayed on that other path of not coming back here, thinking that we were never allowed back, because that wasn't how it was.*

What T. and her *whanau* took to heart (how they had *broken the protocol*) was based on their *ignorance* and separation from traditional customs and language. Kinaesthetic metaphors (*we took that to heart, if we'd stayed on the other path*) suggest that these embodied practices reflect the alienation of years when the family *missed out* on traditional hospitality and community values denoted by key terms *the people, the openness, the welcoming*.

For P. similarly, *opening up the worldview on everything that is me and is any person that's Maori* means entering the space or *the gateway* of *Matauranga Maori*. Her next words, however tell us that this re-entry is conditioned by experiences of an

indeterminate state. The kinaesthetic terms *keep my foot on* and *stay on the non-Maori side* are both followed by laughter reflecting the irony of her position: *So that door that I've been forever trying to keep my foot on (laughs) just opened up....Sometimes I like to stay in the non-Maori side (laughs) a little bit longer – sometimes – and I think it's only because I don't want to face up to the responsibility I guess of being Maori.* The indeterminacy of P.'s position can be clearly heard in this paragraph:

*P.: I knew a part of me – this free, free P– (laughs) you know. Because I did have a free life and I had a very free spirit and my thoughts were not of Maori values although I knew they were there and I knew the respect and I knew how to behave so I knew those as qualities that I should have and that is how I should behave when I am here and all this. So I went through all those motions – it's a bit of schizophrenia eh? (laughs). But they changed; they changed when I came back here. Those values became more confined, more disciplined ...so it's very deep and intrinsic and um part of my whole journey.*

Here, what P. says she *knew* about traditional *deep and intrinsic* responsibilities is traversed by accounts of having *a free life, a free spirit* (as the individual apprehends choice, self-actualisation and self-realisation) which can be read according to the logic of sign value “where all values, all signifiers, are indeed ‘liberated’ to produce more of the same, ad infinitum in a boundless hyperrealised consumerist world” (Grace 2000: 128).

Re-entry into the Maori worldview is paralleled in other narratives by modernist discourse of what might be deemed progressive ideas from western community work. P.



is positioned by both *whakapapa* and western professional discourse, specifically the calling of community work and social work that she engages in back home.

*P.: As a Maori person and as a woman that actually comes from whakapapa descent (and I have a deeper understanding of that now) is that um I am able to do – fulfil some of the dreams that Mum and Dad had through the work that I'm now doing in terms of community work, social work, and the networks that I have and it's been set for me way back when I was born.*

Assimilation by western discourse, in this case the Law, is reflected in other texts. For O, *I spent a lot of time in the Maori Land Court retrieving minutes and learning. In fact I did that for years – four and a half years before I approached any kaumatua.* T. describes *humungeous parties* that occurred in the family; *[as] sort of a ritual that we all just – that people get to believe is normal and which breeds alcoholism to the max which is why a lot of people are having problems now and which is why I am in the job I am now –that's drug and alcohol counselling.*

R.'s account densely reiterates key markers of contemporary feminist, medical and legal discourse concerning disease and violation. The text juxtaposes this western discourse and traditional Maori patriarchal discourse by placing the voices of the *men* and the *people* in direct speech. The significance and force of the phenomena Q. identifies with western discourse, is stressed by her kinaesthetic image, *the reality is it's engulfed our lives* and the reiteration of the phrase *the reality is*.

*R.: My work in all the years I've been working has been um addressing male violence and addressing child protection...The maraes here have been at the forefront of a whole lot of change that's gone on in Maori society. We've had huis that have gone on in the issues of child abuse, cervical cancer, breast cancer, rape um we've had several on what do we do when we've got men in the area that abuse women? And um if we can't do something about them as a whanau, as a family, then what are we doing? We've even talked about abortion, issues of abortion and in vitro fertilisation and, as much as the people say "No, no we don't want to know about that!" but the reality is it's engulfed our lives and we're a part of it, we have to talk about it, we have to have a stand amongst us about how we address these issues....The men will say "No we don't believe in abortion and we're never going to have it", but the reality is that we have young women who do not want a baby ....If we're not supporting them to go through with abortions and address their lives and take their own power back, then what are we actually doing to them?*

How do we read these practices, of learning, counselling, addressing, changing, doing something, and 'righting the wrongs' of the past? In Baudrillardian terms this apparently restorative discourse must be read as addressing the return of Otherness in the form of self-destruction. This return of Otherness follows years of denying the Otherness of the symbolic Maori world as national policies and practices eliminated otherness in all of its forms.

Alienation is no more: the Other as gaze, the Other as mirror, the Other as opacity – all are gone...the subject is neither one nor the other – he [sic] is merely the Same...no longer the hell of other people, but the hell of the Same (Baudrillard 1990: 122).

Q. is accurate to assert the *reality* that western economic and semiotic structures have indeed *engulfed* the Maori worldview while discourses of the self and of *ressentiment*

make identity meaningful. As O.'s text describes, this juxtaposition generates a painful sense of indeterminacy.

*O.: We've been put in a very painful place to bridge a gap that seems unbridgeable and maybe that's what the old people intended. To put us in an untenable position so that we would find a way to make it tenable. And if that has to be endured – well they endured waiting....The gap is ourselves. Well we both see – I said to Lyn one day "What do you do when things get too hard?" and she said "I dive back into my bi-cultural ditch where it's nice and dark and warm and safe and everybody steps over the ditch" Now if I wrote a book I'd call it *The Place Between Two Worlds* because we sit uncomfortably in both, we sit comfortably in neither. You would hope that in the next generation they will sit comfortably in either and maybe that's our place and our time. We're fish out of water really in a way – maybe we're the mangroves you know – maybe we're between two tides – maybe we're – I fail to think that we're an isolated group who will just be and be gone. We're part of a process and the process you know – a tree doesn't stand up and say "Well I'm really happy and I'm going to drink lots of water today cause I'm really happy and tomorrow I am going to feel all droopy and rotten so I won't".*

The preponderance of spatial metaphors embeds this text in the kinaesthetic, appealing to the urgency that O. feels: *painful, unbridgeable, untenable, endured*, and *hard it is to bridge, to sit in* – most of them used several times. The natural-world metaphors *fish out of water, mangroves, between two tides* emphasises the indeterminacy of where and how O. is culturally positioned. By textually utilising direct speech anthropomorphically for a tree (to make a tree talk), O.'s text returns to the natural Maori world where all life forces are animated. The words *survival, generation, process* heighten the sense of a real temporal and social context. In contradiction to the painful position of indeterminacy the

bi-cultural space provides *a nice, dark, warm and safe* refuge; a *bi-cultural ditch*, I dive back into.

At first glance, the indeterminacy in these narratives might suggest a reading according to Homi Bhabha's idea of hybridity. The texts fit Bhabha's concept in terms of how they generate a structure "of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity" (p. 58).

Strategies of hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the 'authoritative', even authoritarian inscription of the cultural sign. At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as a generalized knowledge of a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal....It makes possible an 'interstitial agency' that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism (Bhabha 1996: 58).

The research participants' accounts may be seen as interstitial and as "construct[ing] visions of community and versions of historic meaning" (p.58). Bhabha argues that a culture of disparity and narratives of historical reconstruction are important retroactive forces and harbour the potential to resignify the past in ways that can "work through the present" (p. 59). Bhabha's attempt to foreclose historical determinism by celebrating differences is however in a Baudrillardian frame of reference, obsolete. In Baudrillard's logic humanity "is condemned to indefinite reproduction" (1998: 50). In the hyperreal realm of simulation, where differences are what Grace calls "fully positivised" by sign logic, differences are always comparable and always assume an essence prohibiting otherness (Grace 2000: 83). As Grace points out, oppositional power relations that

structured feminist or cultural critique are either simulated or finished: with “the decline of the real, we only have the *mise-en-scène* of power, which is itself a sign of its disappearance” (p.70). She presents the *mise-en-scène* of power as Baudrillard’s concept to explain the ‘density’ of the present social order, where

the escalating accumulation of signs, life, identity, proliferating in their positivity is indeed a ‘crushing’ spectacle....The logic of sign value, the explosion of consumption, ‘severs the thread’ connecting the interdependent oppositions so that ‘groups’ now jostle endlessly for position ...devoid of any fixed reference. (Grace 2000: 70,71).

The loss of any referent for the simulated flotation of value and signification means that the reference point for reality is displaced, resulting in a simulated real that is more real than that prior ‘real’, with its natural material ontology. As Baudrillard argues, “the object-become-sign no longer gathers its meaning in the concrete relation between two people. It gathers its meaning in differential meaning to other signs” (1981: 66). Bhabha’s “interstitial agency” might well reiterate the comforts of the *bi-cultural ditch*, but this position has become another site of difference, another consumer category, another celebration of value aiding the proliferation of differentiated markets.

To underscore the links between indeterminacy and simulation, Q’s text below seeks to effect a ‘return home’ to traditional practices of reciprocity and symbolic exchange despite being incongruously placed in the hyperreal environment. The excerpt is characterised by auditory and visual modalities which reflect how this participant’s response to her grandchildren resists the need to get a new angle on *reality*. Q’s re-

enactment of direct speech stresses how her own childhood experiences are now juxtaposed by her grandchildren's technologically-driven consumerist *want* and *need*.

*Q.: Well I'm trying to, as I say with the grandchildren, get back to ordinary things. Making you know, trying to make their own fun without the need of having heaps and heaps of toys. Appreciating – um that's not working very good – but just doing plain activities. Like "Nanna we want some pikelets for lunch" and they'll help make pikelets. It, it's really – it stems from seeing the – well I would say probably truthfully, seeing the kids with so much that I didn't have I think. You know when you get down to reality. But at the same time they're not appreciating....So really I've sort of tried to bring them from wanting. Their language is "I want. I want a drink" – um trying to instil manners "please, thank you". But everything is "I want, I need. Nanna I need a pen" Or "I want" you know it's always themselves, they are the central figure and they are wanting everything to come to them and what I've been trying to do is go the other way around. [K.C.: What's that?] Well to share with – to be um well going from worldly things to well nature I suppose you would say. Back to basics – oh well I suppose it's back to basics but yeah that worldly "I want". Um the influence of TV um with "I want that Barbie doll thing" or whatever. They just seem to be wanting everything to be coming to them.*

The terms *worldly things*, *TV*, *I want*, *I need* join previous terms like *schizophrenia*, the *bi-cultural ditch* and the *reality that's engulfed us*, to indicate awareness of how memories of childhood practices compete with recent processes of consumerism and technology. Alphonso Lingis elucidates in phenomenological terms the hyperreal regurgitation Q. is aware of.

It seizes upon every communicable utterance – the axioms of science that trigger intellectual recognition, the "Aha!" that greets pleasures, the yeses that incite cravings –

to code ever more deeply individuals as grasping hands and gaping mouths (Lingis 1996: 96).

As well as constituting difference, the narratives from the research participants reflect their attempts to attend to the remnants of the traditional symbolic realm. The predominant narrative modality is kinaesthetic (or accessed through feelings) coexistent with a strong sense of intuitive imagery. In my Baudrillardian reading, ideas and practices of conserving Maori language and culture reflect that these knowledges and practices are already obsolete. Consequently, Aotearoa/New Zealand itself can be conceptualised as a kind of interactive-museum conceding the former annihilation of Maori Otherness as well as its restoration as the simulated object of nostalgia.

I also read the research participants' assertion of the spiritual as a discursive substantiation of the need to conserve, relearn, reclaim and mediate the Maori world of symbolic exchange. Hence this discourse reflects the haunting of the hyperrealised west by a prior symbolic realm. The system of accumulation and capital predicated on signification and difference might have rendered nature and culture indistinguishable but ultimately the west can never escape its Other, the realm of symbolic exchange.

## Entering the Realm of Symbolic Exchange: Homesickness (2)

This should not be seen as simple nostalgia for the past: throughout this 'lived' dimension, consumption can be historically and culturally defined as *the exaltation of signs based on the denial of the reality of things* (Baudrillard 1990: 63).

The striking assertion of things Maori in Discourse 3 – Homesickness thus far has had the effect of dividing the text according to whether the participants' memories are of the symbolic realm of traditional Maori culture, or a kind of symbolic realm that is Pakeha. The Pakeha texts also reflect juxtaposition between the strongly felt experiences of childhood and simulated forms of those direct memories, which act to generate human relations in a consumerist model, and which dilute and impoverish the originary feelings.

In the following, we encounter N.'s awareness of the current acceleration of signs of the symbolic realm triggered by her memories of summer beach holidays. The excerpt begins with a strongly embodied sensation of the internal sense of the acceleration of *it* meaning nostalgia.

*N.: It [nostalgia] sort of started when I could remember twenty years ago...And, then as I've got older it seems to be increasingly powerful. Um and I've been thinking about it and one of the thoughts I had is that it must be in some way healing for us or strengthening or empowering because people go to school reunions in droves. And especially at the moment there's all this stuff in magazines like North and South about, you know "When I went to the beach when I was five and your Mum preserved the eggs and Dad caught the snapper and cooked it". And all that stuff seems to be – so it's part of this phenomenon of identity too, of shared experience. Yeah it's about shared experience – it's about who we are and it's about affirming that with other people so you get feedback from others who say "Yes it was like that for me too, so that's what I am too. I'm the same sort of human. I'm the same sort of creature". So it's about our creatureliness what our humanness is about – this shared stuff in the past.*



In this excerpt, reminders of the past initially denote a tangible sensation of the acceleration of power. Then N. privileges her *thinking* or cognitive sense to substantiate this with medical and human-rights discourse regarding *healing, strengthening* and *empowering*. The universality of this nostalgia is reflected in how it is experienced by *us, people* (repeated twice), *we, me, human, and creature*. The non-specificity of the key terms *that stuff* (repeated three times) and *shared experience* (repeated three times) directly refers to how consumerism, *this stuff in magazines like North and South*, has commodified and concretised memories of its cultural 'others'. N.'s text reiterates the non-specific term *stuff* to talk about the commodifying of the intimate and treasured experience she called *paradise* in Discourse 1 – Home and *healing, strengthening* and *empowering* in this excerpt. In this way people are indeterminately positioned by the relationship between the deeply felt memories of a symbolic realm and the awareness that these are fixed, frozen, and reiterated in the interests of transnational consumerism to which one is also party.

N.'s text discloses her awareness of having childhood experiences abstracted and regurgitated as commodities. Such material productions of memories sell movies, scents, films, books and (as N. points out) New Zealand productions of multinational magazines. The sense of this being a particularly contemporary phenomenon is caught by the phrase *especially at the moment*. The markers of identity discourse that proliferate throughout the text include *who we are, that's what I am too, the same sort of human, same sort of*

*creature* to strengthen its cohesive and persuasive qualities. The phenomenon that overwhelms N. is given a fixed commercial referent: *North and South* magazine becomes the place where people's memories are recycled and disseminated in accordance with the coded logic of hyperreality. Governed and structured by sign logic, there is no self or other but the operation of internal differentiation as well as general homogenisation in the interests of rendering all social forms as commodities or as objects of consumption.

It is this homogenisation that, in the guise of a proliferation of simulated differences, creates abstract totalisation that, Baudrillard [1972] argues, permits the functioning of signs 'to establish and perpetuate real discriminations and the order of power' (Grace 2000: 24).

Discourse 3 reflects how identity with the past generates reunions, family meetings, hometown visits, researching ancestry and family trees: Baudrillard points out that ideology mythologises within linguistic processes by restoring universality and "objective innocence" (1981: 159). In the New Zealand context the hyperreal regurgitates the view of a world where we *all* had fun at the beach, *all* could swim and *all* play in long grasses and walk the streets safely.

The "proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality" (Baudrillard 1995: 77), means an irreversible abundance of lived experience. All this results in a symptom and effect of the western world where "power, meaning and reality are illusory" (Grace 2000: 192), where more of the same is endlessly repeated, and where individuals are passive, consumers in a world of signs without referents. No wonder N. concludes her paragraph

about *North and South* magazine with a mixture of imagery about getting older; the kinaesthetic (*harder and harder*) and visual imagery (*you begin to look at yourself, really look*) that constructs fragmentation:

*N.: And I think, as you get older you are increasingly aware, or it gets harder and harder to protect yourself from reality. Your defences begin to – they either intensify, and turn into neuroses and psychoses and various forms of addiction, or they begin to crumble and you begin to look at yourself and really look at what goes on in the world and that can be really horrifying.*

The next short texts further highlight how the television and music industries appropriate the space of childhood memories. Unlike N. who both enjoys nostalgia and critiques it, this section presents the participant's pleasure in the commodification of nostalgia. The imagery used of these experiences is couched in appropriately visual, auditory and kinaesthetic terms.

*K.: I looked at The Way We Were the other night on TV and that brought back memories. Just the footy uniforms, the gymslips, yeah just the way it was in those days when it was so much easier. Where there were no responsibilities, just bumming.*

*A.: Music particularly sparks me off. Listening to the request session on Saturday night where the oldies' songs take me back to events and people long ago when my family was united, experiencing a song and a meal together.*

These texts indicate that recycled and mediatised experiences still trigger a version of memories, however much they echo an era that is already extinct and however removed from the individual's current experience they might be.

## Remnants of the Landscape

The process whereby the exaltation of signs belies reality is maintained when some transcripts speak of returning to live in the beach, river or bush landscape that challenged and beguiled the speakers as girls. L. strives to reconcile her memories of the embodied landscape of Pakeha childhood with the scraps and remnants of what remains, a characteristic all of the participants' practice in physically or psychically returning. Similarly to the Maori women's concerns to conserve and attend to Maori people and culture, L's text is overlaid with Green discourse about conserving, nurturing, protecting and guarding the *environment*.

*L.: You have a collective responsibility for the whole environment. Well we've only been put here to look after this land – okay we own it in terms of a piece of paper but um – I wasn't brought up on a farm but I had quite a lot of experiences of farm and country life as a child but that's an entirely different thing. The farmer has to make a living off the piece of land so he or she does it in a way that may not be the kindest to the environment whereas we don't have to make a – or we can't make a living off this piece of land, we can only look after it – um....We've got all the bush protected so you know – over a period of time that will increase and become a much more solid piece of environment....The kauri trees – they're not a nostalgic part but they're a historical part. I mean one recognises them, you recognise them and recognise the significance that they have on the survival of this whole area. From here northwards was all like this and it is a wonderful reminder of what an incredible landscape it must have been before anybody came to this country. So these days it's guardianship to the fore.*

This text is notable for its lack of embodied imagery except for the modality of sight revealed in the term *recognise* (three times). Key terms are nominalised denoting the

tenacity of *responsibility*, *significance* and *guardianship*. There is defiance in L.'s position regarding conservation in the face of threats from contemporary forms of farming. In L.'s words there is *collective responsibility* where the individualising practices of land division constitute (what she later calls) a *threat* augmented by the blight (*enormous horrible spot on the landscape*) of *fast food stops*.

The contemporary New Zealand practice of living on lifestyle blocks can be read according to Baudrillard's claim that the rediscovery of 'Nature' is actually the recycling of "a nature condemned by its very existence" (1990: 65). Nature was instantiated in the era of the industrial revolution as the grand referent of an economy of utility, a primeval presence opposing culture in a system that aligns knowledge with the subject and nature with the object. L's extract is contextualised by recognising how less than one hundred years ago New Zealand was covered in bush which was full of native birds. Over the last fifty years in particular, the government programmes regulating this environment authorised the planting of *pinus radiata*. As loggers cut down native timbers these were replaced by crops of this species that grew quickly and provided a profitable resource for the timber, pulp and paper industries. The result is that today there are two generations of New Zealanders whose only experience of this former natural bio-diversity consists of a few clumps of bush, and who neither know nor care if their environment consists of native or exotic trees. *Pinus radiata* forests are merely the saleable 'green blur' that sells

New Zealand to tourists on buses, while some conservationists, like L., try valiantly to hold onto what remains of the bush.

Notions of *guardianship* and *collective responsibility* for *protected bush* and *Kauri* acknowledges that this native bush is already obsolete. L's concern is based on a discourse of conservation. Concomitantly, her property is a kind of 'museum' acknowledging the prior eradication and resurrection as a simulated object of nostalgia.

D.'s narrative below reveals that, (like Maori language and culture, native bush, Kauri trees, birdsong and food sources) *ancestry* and a concomitant *sense of existence* might be understood in theoretical terms as valued commodities to be guarded because of their contemporary extinction.

*D.: I also had enormous security which I only became aware of when I went to the States, by living in a household in which I had every expectation that it would belong in my family for years, you know, which is kind of an English heritage, yeah...a sort of Canterbury Christchurch thing perhaps...a sense of belonging, of rigidity, of having your turangawaewae and I think I can well understand the Maori thing of having your turangawaewae you know...it simply means that the house is not going to be swept away from under your feet....I think I am lucky because that home is still there and I think my brother might decide to sell it, then it might be gone. So I won't even have it in my mind that I can go back, you know, it won't even be that kind of sense of existence that is so important to people – that things still exist. You know what I mean by sense of existence? [K.C. Tell me about that] Well um – people save the whales and they may never have seen a whale in their lives and they may never expect to see a whale in their lives but to them the existence of whales is very important, very, very important. And so it's that sense of existence that one day they could go there. People may never go to the forest. I mean I know people in wheelchairs that fight to save the native forest. They can never go there but want to know it exists. They want it to carry on. It's very important in their mind's eye to have that there – to know it's there....I mean nostalgia is a sense of longing, it's not a sense of regret, not a sense of not-belonging so I can only talk to you about those things – those things are very strong.*

The predicates heard here echo both thought and sense, since in the same holistic way by which some participant's gave authority to the Maori sense of the spiritual, the narrator

here is constructing a narrative of knowledge and discernment. The terms *sense* and *think* are each found three times and *understand* once. On the other hand, the imagery of kinaesthetic embodiment only once utilises the metaphor where *the house is not going to be swept away under your feet*, substantiating D.'s reiteration of the Maori term *turangawaewae*. Nominalisations that stress the key concept *heritage*, are *security*, *expectation*, *belonging*, *rigidness* and *existence* (twice).

In spite of these other modalities, the text is powerfully governed all the way through by the visual, as D. sees her family home in her *mind's eye* and believes people have a sense of the existence of things *they may never have seen*. The text mixes ancestry and Green discourse to make a visual appeal for the *sense of existence*. This sense can be read as embedded in the even-if-only-imagined reality of a real home, a real *turangawaewae*, real whales, real forests and real being. The text stresses awareness of a world where these are profoundly threatened with D.'s *very strong* embodied feelings regarding *those things*.

## The Uncanny

At this crucial point in the chapter, we encounter the research participants' own awareness of what is pointed out and analysed. These participants' texts reflect their awareness that the intensity of memory is erased through the capture and material

regurgitation of the substance of their memories, in the form of signs and commodities.

The following two excerpts reflect the deeply disturbed ambivalence of this juxtaposition.

M.'s narrative attempts to evoke the acutely held memory of the streets and community of Kaikohe in the 1950s. For her, this childhood world was *full of people we knew, a comfortable safe place to be, a pleasant place, and just all space*. In the following however, *Kaikohe has changed; whether it's changed really or it's just changed in my eyes I because I mean, we've been gone so long I just see it in a different light I suppose*.

*M.: I mean you go there now – apart from the fact that you don't live there, I don't feel it's got the same aura about it or something – it's different – yeah – it's full of strangers – of course it's full of strangers but it's just different, yeah. [K.C. How specifically?] Different sort of shopping complexes of course. Like, you know, what to us was Kaikohe was the big Post Office and the Power Board building and they've all gone, they've moved, like they've sort of – the comfortable backbone of New Zealand as it was then isn't there. And it's like you know, you've got video shops and land agent shops. Well heck we never saw a land agent shop in Kaikohe. It wasn't a mission, yeah. And like Pip Williams' Pharmacy on the corner, well they're not there, all the things have changed, without asking us (laughs) – yeah like Mellsop's Bookshop and Blakey's Bookshop, you know they're just – there's nothing like that – there's none of the old names in business anymore either. So you know you go back there – and you can go back to Russell, and it's changed but it hasn't changed. Like the shops still look the same um but over there progress is change and then you go down the bottom and there's a lot of empty shops. Like it's looking kind of sad, its development moved, so it's – I suppose it's on the up really because I mean it's got things that count now – you've got The Warehouse and Food – not Foodtown but Countdown – that's where the people go. Big Courthouse yeah. Very good – which indicates that there's a lot of social problems up there I think. You know Social, you've got Social Welfare Departments and things and we never heard of those – Income Support – all necessary of course but not part of our growing up.*



This text is overwhelmingly a litany of absences, introduced by cognitive markers (*I mean, the fact*) underscoring the gravity of what *isn't there* anymore. A powerful embodied metaphor regarding what has been supplanted (*the comfortable backbone of New Zealand*) personifies the nation of New Zealand itself, a strategy that directs our attention to the *Different sort of shopping complexes*. Anthroponomy, or the list of proper names, designates the known shopkeepers and emphasising the reality of the previous kind of symbolic world. Their very lack is reiterated by the key terms *absent, gone, moved, isn't there, changed, nothing like that, none...anymore either, they're not there*. Pronouns that homogenise the knowledge of what was there refer to *us, they've, we, you*. The personification of Kaikohe continues with the phrase, *it's looking kind of sad*. Abstract nouns enhance the effect of important terms by freezing indices of modern progress: *mission, progress, development*.

The narrative irony presents feeling of encountering this uncanny changed environment.<sup>3</sup> The key phrase, *it's got things that count now* refers ironically to the type of mass automatised shopping engendered by the supermarket chain Countdown. M.'s voice on the interview tape modulates the bitterness she feels about this milieu: *Big courthouse yeah – Very good*. The use of visual imagery stresses M's sense of the uncanny; *it's changed but it hasn't changed. Like, the shops still **look** the same*. There is a joke that nevertheless has meaning in her indignation that the changes *we never heard*

*of* have occurred *without asking us* (meaning those childhood friends like the interviewer, who share M.'s memory of Kaikohe in the 1950s).

The text begs to be read in terms of Freud's notion of the 'uncanny' which collapses the distinction between the familiar and unfamiliar that so disturbs M.: "what is *heimlich* thus becomes *unheimlich*" (Freud 1919: 224). However, this research into women's nostalgia is located between the modern and post modern worlds, which means reading nostalgia in quite an altered manner. There is something here which is not adequately theorised by a psychoanalytic reading, something created by the different cultural context given by consumer society. Reality and its reference has been seriously undermined, in ways that did not exist in Freud's nineteenth century. As Turner points out (1987), the present is a context where the world against which Freud and Marx protested is largely obsolete.

The three discourses of nostalgia identified in my research materials have to be read in accordance with the knowledge that cultural intelligibility is now undermined in particular ways. We have entered a time that is produced by an "escalation of the true, of the lived experience" (Baudrillard 1995: 77). It means that technological developments in the mediation of reality have affected perceptions of time and space so profoundly that there is no longer the capacity to realise how reality has been altered. The dense reiteration of indices of communal society which no longer exist is found in D.'s text, which generates a litany of the values erased by the hyperreal.

*D.: I am nostalgic for a world in which there was some kind of common identity that kept a larger community together. Common heritage and I think that's been very subtly replaced by television programmes and people that don't read a common base lexicon of literature. And people that don't value language and people that don't have a long attention span... we've been trained into it...I actually do think that we are losing a lot of the links of our identity. Because there is no community. We no longer have links back into a common community. We don't, we're losing – we're becoming a very much more shifting mobile um – disengaged society and community values and community aspirations and community – sense of community isn't there. I mean we – because of mobility and also because of this huge emphasis on individualism and competition, and competition actually destroys a sense of everybody being your brother or your sister, you know because they become your competitors. So I think that's a sad world...it's all the American way.*

The key terms here conveying a sense of the loss of a cohesive symbolic world include *common heritage, base lexicon of literature, links of our identity, community values, aspirations and civic responsibility*. There is also the loss of embodied practices referred to by *reading, valuing language, and attention span*. These losses are constituted by controls regulating human behaviour: *shifting, mobile, disengaged, individualistic, competitive and American* practices. The predicates *I think, you know* and *I actually do think* make this text a solemn appeal to the intellect and stresses *a sad world*.

Baudrillard cites Ceronetti to argue that the Western exclusion of, in this instance the Otherness of Maori, and Pakeha kinds of symbolic exchange, brings about a state when “[a]ll relationships are disturbed” and there are negative vibrations, general disequilibrium, confused panic, indefinable fear, degeneration, madness, sick and violent

animals and plants (Baudrillard 1990: 123). Following Grace, this concurs with what now exists in New Zealand culture with “the endless chain of social diseases and environmental issues increasingly plaguing the sanitised, desymbolised, postmodern ‘social’” (2000: 136).

Today, apparently incompatible and contradictory notions about identity and alienation reinforce and consolidate each other, because the code underpinning the present system is non-ambivalent, totally positivised, never defined, and never the object of critique or knowledge, and thus in effect totalitarian. Signs generated as positivity amass power that structurally negates reversal or challenge. Meaning is now totally marked in signs and the reality underpinning memories of childhood has passed from the referential to the structural form of the sign. Discourse 3 – Homesickness shows how the re-enactment of memories and imagination are severed from their signifieds or equivalences in the real. There is no longer a referential ‘home’, no aura of the reciprocity, circularity, and seduction of marae-life untouched by accumulation. The simulated intensity of multiple childhoods itself can now be called ‘cool’. ‘Cool’, as Baudrillard explains, “designate[s] an intense but affectless relativity of terms, an activity motivated purely by the rules of the game and the commutation of terms to the point of their exhaustion” (1990: 114). The marketed memories of childhood exist as a pure stratagem of linguistic and social values.

Memories today are endlessly presented in film, video, advertising and television. In a political economy of signification, these memories, in keeping with consumer interests, are indeterminate. The total loss of the principle of reference means that there is no separation of then and now, Maori and Pakeha, childhood and adulthood, reality and fantasy, but all of these terms are manifested in their profusion and in difference. Our nostalgia is addressed in simulated memories and imaginings which are devoted to reiterating the whole project of our lifestyle or identity. Hence, the political economy of the sign appropriates and regurgitates whatever might constitute threat. But as we read next, humanity itself **can** effect a distancing from hyperreal structures – in ex-centric and re-volting practices.

### **Ex-centricity**

It is quite difficult to tell what constitutes the scene of the body. But at the very least: it is the place where it plays, and most particularly with itself, where it escapes itself in elliptical forms and movement, in dance, where it escapes its inertia in gesture, where it becomes unbound by the aura of the gaze, where it becomes allusion or absence – in brief, where it offers itself as seduction (Baudrillard 1990: 167).

My analysis of this third discursive field from the narrative transcripts so far reveals juxtaposition. There is text generating the deeply felt, embodied return to the remnants of childhood experiences of symbolic exchange. Simultaneously there is the regurgitation of this embodied knowing into sign systems that concretise the memory so it becomes an

childhood experiences of symbolic exchange. Simultaneously there is the regurgitation of this embodied knowing into sign systems that concretise the memory so it becomes an icon to be commodified and traded. Augmenting both of these positions theoretically is an analysis of the loss of the symbolic realm of childhood through western economic and semiotic appropriation, which means that memories can only be evoked and are not there to be returned home to. The recognition of this juxtaposition results in a deeply disturbed ambivalence towards the memory that can only be evoked because its acuteness is dulled by its commodified rendition.

The following section discusses two texts that effect fully embodied efforts to consciously harness memory in all of its intensity. Landscape, plants, animals, embodiment and immediacy are central to the narratives that follow, as they describe the participants' behaviours which are synchronised and regulated through the body. Although the two excerpts are located in the present, they re-enact practices constituted in terms of childhood. In this way, the sensations of childhood experiences are consciously embedded in a contemporary cultural milieu.

The extracts include describing physical acts of the body and recognising the inner psyche, along with the recognition of knowing. The narratives echo Baudrillard's notion of ex-centred or eccentric behaviour that we must attend to because to do so exemplifies how "its no longer we who think the world, but the world which thinks us" (Baudrillard 1998: 43).

*J.: I guess having had those experiences and found those places they are really, really special eh? And they stay with you forever, don't they really? They're just part of me, so that's what I do. I've learnt from it eh? You learn where there are good places to be like I go to the beach because I want to be there and I love it. To go out and be in those places, how important they are to me, that's basically my survival....Just, just the fresh air eh? The sky is blue, the trees are green (laughs) it is nice. It's like there aren't any sides to the boxes kind of stuff. Like as though you can go if you want to there's no restriction. I think that's about right. Well what do I do? Sit on a swing under a tree. Oh yes, sit on a swing. Walk on a – just walk under the trees, swim, run, wave my hands in the air, swing round and round and round with a balloon, blow bubbles. I actually did that on Xmas day, bought some bubbles and blew them, chased them. Yeah its that freedom to be able to just lie in the hot sand and be unaware of other people around you....I could sit up in a tree for three hours and watch the birds, but not all the time. Like. (don't go home really worried about me) I don't sit up the tree watching birds! I don't know, you can't explain it eh? That sounds silly 'cause I don't like being on my own all the time, that's not what I'm saying, but you can still appreciate. Oh it's like we don't value those simple, special things.*

In this text, reference to the singularity of aspects of a kind of symbolic realm is emphasised by the repetition of *really really*. The narrative is dotted with the interrogative marker *eh?* an invitation to the listener generated to compel concord, while the short phrases evoke the articulation patterns of childhood. The kinaesthetic sensation of *fresh air* and the vivid visual immediacy evoked by *blue sky*, *green grass* followed by laughter highlights this simplicity. The phrase, *It is nice* denotes an internal feeling within the body. The two nominalisations *no restriction* and *that freedom* (the only examples of complex vocabulary) emphasise the permanence of the sensations they evoke. The

sensations are further stressed by the spatial metaphor *there aren't any sides to the boxes*, and the verbal phrase denoting freedom of physical movement, *you can go if you want to*.

J.'s text reiterates the lists of activities from Discourse 1 – Home but as an adult in the present day rather than in memories of performing these as a child. Verbs describing her adult activities pepper the text: *sit on a swing* (repeated), *walk*, *swim*, *run*, *wave*, *swing round and round with a balloon*, *blow bubbles*, *lie in the hot sand*, *sit up in a tree*, and *watch the birds*. Then as if gaining a sense of how exaggerated the claims she is making might be in a rational world, the text intellectually shifts to the time of the interview and disclaims the tree sitting activity. In this way the text grapples with the struggle (*that sounds silly*) to explain how J. *values* and *appreciates those simple, special things*.

The next transcript presents a similar dilemma. Both generate a contradiction between physical behaviours which G. deems *playing* and which J. classifies as *really*, *really special* and *important* and the articulation of this significance in the wider world. G.'s text first comments upon how habitual the embodied practices are.



G.: You see I've never stopped living some of those things. I've sort of insisted on keeping them. Well it's like having the horses mainly. I think that it was such a good life and once you got the horses out the range of distance you could cover was sort of like, tenfold....And so that's why I've kept having horses. It's like keeping that intact. Those sort of things that I really enjoyed. This feeling of yeah playing I suppose. Of doing things like you'd go and do something just for the sake of the adventure of it. Like you might think – "Can I walk back along here if I did it on top of something-or-other? Yeah I have always kept that. In a way that probably I haven't even been aware of it. You think, oh well you sort of make it into some sort of –you enjoy yourself I think. I've kept that ability to enjoy myself. Which is quite you know in a small way not a huge thing, a grandiose thing. You think like if you walked down the stairs if you could do it, maybe with your – you know you'd set a little sort of (laugh) test. With your eyes closed or something. And you think "Well can you do it backwards taking five steps at a time or something?" I think it's that, playing.

G.'s text generates a visual predicate to refer to her childhood experiences, followed by the reflective phrase *I think* to emphasise how horse riding now re-enacts the physical and emotional sensation of boundless space back then. This act reinscribes the movement or circulation Baudrillard describes here.

[A] kind of symbolic circulation, of reversibility and linkage of constellations, as in the primitive representations of the world where animals, plants, human beings and the elements link with and act against each other. (Baudrillard 1998: 43).

The kinaesthetic term *feeling* introduces challenges or *the adventure of it*. Then there is an example of the interior dialogue accompanying G.'s practices of play and adventure. The narrative device of directly relating internal thought processes use direct speech with

the effect of heightening the impact of this discourse. J.'s broken phrasing might be read similarly.

These embodied practices reflect the problem of articulating the feeling of playing. The modifiers *sort of* and *like* and the act of self-deprecating laughter resituate G.'s claims in the phrase *while you'd set a little sort of (laugh) test*. These practices are held to be *small/not huge/not grandiose/little*, all terms seeking to reduce the significance of their pretensions. The reflective appeal *I think it's that, playing* emphasises that the enjoyment of the physical and emotional knowing that goes with these lifelong practices is called *playing* in the adult world. By habitually participating in embodied rituals, acts, practices or performances of imagination and play, two of the research participants in Discourse 3 consciously re-evoke the symbolic order in bodily form. When the modalities of the body are engaged to remember and re-enact sensations, one may understand how memory is not only a mnemonic and recollection but phenomenologically a unity of signs (thoughts, reflections and narrative) and bodily performance. This discourse is interesting, too, because it shows how difficult it is to explain and make sense of the embodied practices remaining to us from the sensations of symbolic exchange, which as Baudrillard argues is all still there, and for everyone.

There's a dimension of play, including in those areas where everything seems to function according to laws. There's a secret rule. You can't lay it bare. You can't stage its operation....Without this kind of drift, this exchange, this unconscious otherness, things

would be unbearable. If one lived only in differential relationships, the relation of the will and representation, the world itself would not survive (Baudrillard 1998: 44-5).

While it is disturbing that these special acts of play and life have come to be rendered in an apologetic discourse, this non-fluency might, in Baudrillard's terms, reiterate that this dimension of life cannot be laid bare. It is impossible for such arbitrary and random experiences of play to make measurable sense within the relentless materialisation of the contemporary world. When questioned about her internal psychical world within these forms of embodiment, J. says her life would be unbearable without these practices.

*K.C. So it's important to you?*

*J.: Yeah hell yeah. I wouldn't survive if I couldn't – you know me – you know me – my doors are open eh? ...*

*K.C. What do you mean you couldn't survive J?*

*J.: Ooh, ooh I'd be like a caged animal. Ooh I think my head would explode eventually. I'd go nuts I think if I couldn't. I don't know what I'd do – I hate to think eh?*

This particular text confirms that one woman's attempts to relive the intelligibility of the sensuous environment of her childhood is carried out with an awareness of the need for refuge from the totalitarian systems of contemporary life.

## Re-volt

By always going back to the branches suspended in the tree of memory, no detail will be forgotten (Kristeva 1996: 304).

In this section we examine Kristeva's theorisation of the intersection of the psychic world of embodied memory and contemporary life, which is the very framework within which the remembered and hyperrealised discourses of nostalgia are juxtaposed. Two recent works by Julia Kristeva reflect how memory might encourage revulsion towards or rejection of our current global economic system that privileges the virtual world of robotics and images over the senses.

First, in her reading of Proust (1996) referred to in Chapter 3, Kristeva is rigorous in acknowledging how "the passion of bodies" has become utilitarian in a world of technical efficiency, spectacle, banality and totalitarianism (1996: 325). She acknowledges that Proust's theories were historically and biographically specific to the modern era of his time, but her analysis of the Proustian construction of time suggests that life today can also be revitalised by searching for past *jouissance* and experience within an embodied sense of time. Kristeva claims that Proust's theories offer an alternative way of thinking about postmodern human life as *une jouie hors-sujet*, literally "a joy outside the subject". In her view, he achieves this in his writing by slowing down the impatience of "Being-in-advance-of-itself" where "being" is a present participle

meaning being ahead of oneself and constructing a desire for the past where (like the Maori notion of the past being in front of one), “one’s appetite for life appears as a stairway that one goes up backwards” (p.310) as in the “Being” that goes before itself.

Kristeva’s argument is that psychoanalytic theory reproduces this operation when fantasy converts the unconscious into a narrative that performs the unconscious. The experience can also be facilitated by writing about sensations of a previous *jouissance*, perhaps (as for Proust) triggered by food, drink or smell. She claims that the process of writing restores time to language, and propels the writer (and reader) out of the disenchanted state towards one’s “inner wealth” (p.299). Perhaps the same is true for spoken recollections provoked by the questioning of an interview?

Kristeva’s more recent work *The Future of a Revolt* (1998) uncompromisingly denounces the forms of current economic amnesia that foreclose on an open and challenging way of living by encountering otherness. She demands “the revalorisation of the *sensitive experience* as an antidote to the technical ratiocination” through the concept of ‘*re-volt*’. This is described “in the etymological and Proustian meaning of the term: a return of meaning to impulse and vice versa, in order to reveal memory and re-begin the subject”(p. 20).

Thus revolt, as return-returning-displacement-change, constitutes the deep logic of a certain culture that I would like to rehabilitate and the acuity of which appears to me to be nowadays very much threatened (Kristeva 1998: 3).

Re-volt endeavours to harness what is most alive and promising, a perspective that Kristeva aligns with the feminist valorisation of maternity and other aspects of the sensitive, embodied and intimate spheres of life. She argues that “[t]he immense responsibility of women with respect to the survival of the species – how to preserve the liberty of our bodies while ensuring optimal conditions for the life of our children? – is directly related to this rehabilitation of the sensitive” (Kristeva 1998: 3).

As in her former text, Kristeva suggests that intimate revolt is best accessed through the psychoanalytic process which “offers people the possibility to begin anew their psychic life, and thus strictly speaking their life” (p.17). In addition, it might be claimed that exploring the discursive field of nostalgia allows the subject to see that nostalgia is a vehicle for the process of *re-volting* in Kristeva’s terms. Participants in the research project rotate embodied memories throughout their re-enactments in narration. Practices of going back to the *marae* and to the landscapes of bush, river and beach catch the same impulse to *re-volt* and re-invigorate an aliveness emanating from the senses.

By revisiting the sensations of the lived body in re-enactment, all of the research participants to a greater or lesser extent were able to re-experience play, intimacy, *jouissance* and *sense of existence*. I could argue that Kristeva’s yearning for the ceaseless *re-volt* is about valuing nostalgia, generating, what H. calls *a really useful healthy place for all of us, it’s an active connection to the past, which I think is very important*. In Kristeva’s words it is the

valuing of the singular, of the intimate, of the art of living, of taste, of leisure, of pleasure for nothing, of grace, of chance, of playfulness, of squandering, of the 'accursed share', in short, of liberty as essence of 'Being in the world' before any 'cause' (Kristeva 1998: 31).

In this reading of Discourse 3 – Homesickness, the adult voice has quickened the childhood sounds of memory and imagination found in Discourses 1 and 2. The embodied attempts in each transcript to reconnect with childhood memories in the face of a profoundly changed environment stresses the value of new memory now: remembering what it feels like to have previously sensed experiences and emotions confirmed. The intensity and immediacy of the first experience is lost (through processes examined in Discourse 2) and only partially regained in the postmodern hyperreality. In the first part of Discourse 3, embodied knowing is regurgitated into sign systems that commodify, fix and freeze over the memory so it is reduced to an icon that can be conserved and traded. The profoundly disturbed ambivalence of this juxtaposition comes from recognising that the intensity of one's remembered existence in an embodied realm that can only be evoked is erased through its commodified rendition.

Yet the equal intensity of the hyperreal regurgitation of a ghosted symbolic exchange discloses the depth of western culture's desperation to cover up the fact that a system governed by signification and difference cannot escape its excluded other – the symbolic. Accordingly, and only in glimpses, the discourses of nostalgia generate an entry into Kristeva's "time and space of revolts" (p1). Re-volting practices re-enact

sensations of embodiment, (climbing up the stairs backwards) and roll back, re-store, reconsider and re-turn critical attention to being alive. They provoke relapses into childhood inflections, into adult confusion, into the smells, tastes and sounds of another world, into the rhythms of laughter, the fog of tears, and the warmth of voices. Into what Lingis calls “a zone of intimacy and hospitality...[where] one’s voice which no longer fixes insights into things and delineates the ways of the world, rumbles on in the undifferentiated, unbounded expanses of light” (Lingis 1996: 96).



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**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> As Grace points out, Foucault's notion of how power constitutes the social reflects this critical perspective (2000: 142).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'return home' was used to advertise political interests in the last general election in New Zealand (1998), with billboards exhorting Maori to "Return Home to Labour".

<sup>3</sup> According to Martin and Ringham (2000), *antiphrasis* describes a figure of speech that produces irony by using one word in a sentence in a sense directly opposite to its usual meaning (p.25).

## CHAPTER TWELVE: CONCLUSIONS

If melancholia is the latest form of “world-weariness” and if the number of depressed people is growing, is it because melancholia functions in a social context in which social bonds have been severed? (Kristeva 1996: 81).

This chapter offers some conclusions that might be made about nostalgia in the light of the original research foci. My initial concern was with the role nostalgia might play in formulating women’s lives today, in the midst of western technoscience, global consumerism, the plunder of natural resources and the eradication of all other cultures in the interests of transnational markets. This milieu seemed oppositional to the feelings, action and values reflected (by way of example) in my own cultural experiences of nostalgia. Yet personal nostalgia appears to be either a pejorative term denoting trivia and sentiment, or something reconstituted in the banality of consumerism. This disparity provoked the investigation here that has concentrated upon three foci:

1. An exploration of the historical construction of the meanings of nostalgia within authoritative western literatures.
2. Qualitative research designed to generate narrative accounts to investigate contemporary women’s nostalgia in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
3. Consideration of the critical potential of nostalgia to articulate and address the problematic conditions of women’s lives in the contemporary milieu.

These three foci can now be seen to give rise to the following three theses.

### **Thesis One**

- The first thesis argues that the maligned status of nostalgia reflects the ongoing preoccupation of western culture with foreclosing the realm of symbolic exchange. In this argument, the deprecation of nostalgia is complicit with the genocide of culture

accompanying the “Westernisation of the world” (Latouche 1996: xiv), and reveals how this happens with such efficacy.

The curious disparity between practices of nostalgia that seem to be currently common in women’s lives and the demeaned status of nostalgia in the modern west does not appear to be directly theorised in feminist literature. Freud’s explanation certainly must now be considered out of date. Consequently, here the status and potential of nostalgia is investigated primarily by drawing upon Baudrillard’s (and Grace’s) theoretical trajectory, complemented by contributions from Kristeva and Cixous. When aspects of these theoretical explanations are applied to postphenomenological and semiotic analysis of New Zealand women’s narratives, I have concluded that practices of nostalgia are trivialised because they constitute the deeply felt memories of remnants of a symbolic realm. The ambivalence of the embodied, chaotic, and non-functional order of nostalgic practice is fundamentally ‘other’ to oppositional structures of economic exchange and signification upon which processes of westernisation are premised.

Following Foucault and Baudrillard’s models, an analysis of the upsurge of consumption in modernity means that values regulated by both the political economy and Saussurean linguistics float freely to facilitate a world constructed primarily in the terms of identity with and difference from a Eurocentric, phallogocentric model. As part of what Weber called ‘disenchantment’, modern discourses became disengaged from residual cultural practices associated with prior cultural systems. Medical science gradually dissociated from an organic pathology where the bodily sickness felt by being away from home was diagnosed as nostalgia. Such homesickness threatened modern paradigms of

meaning with its excluded other, the disconcerting sensations, emotions, ambivalence and reciprocity of symbolic exchange.

As an embodied longing for past cultures in which people experience some sort of symbolic exchange, nostalgia is troublesome because it seems to question, even endanger, historical truth, progress, accumulation and growth. Nostalgia was consequently situated in the mind rather than the body. This epistemological and ontological shift induced violent psychical distinctions where the signifier was detached from the signified, the subject from the object, and the psychic from the physical. Consciousness was driven forward by the sense of loss and regret for what was prior. In this context, practices of nostalgia or looking back were understood as part of the psyche, and being futile as well as needing redirection. The social order of the modern economy, and the linguistics accompanying that, devised the nostalgic subject and object which increasingly replaced embodied ways of understanding human life (and how it is situated in the world).

Early in the twentieth century nostalgia's new home became Freud's Oedipal one, predicated upon the oppositional terms and vocabularies of masculine fixation and neurosis (1919: 72). The deconstructive analysis of Freud's account of nostalgia offered a window into how nostalgia was given meaning in the psychosciences: psychoanalysis, psychology and psychiatry. These historically specific phallogentric structures neutralised and 'cured' the longings for the world of symbolic exchange experienced in childhood or in traditional cultures.

The psychosciences echoed the literary recognition of processes of disenchantment accompanying the individualism that was linked to the severing of

symbolic ties, especially with the idealised maternal, as a prerequisite for adulthood. Simultaneously, the violent experience of trauma in the loss of primary cultural experiences and communities came to be read as a pejorative term denoting a wistful, sentimental, illusory emotion. The way in which violent trauma was neutralised points to the desperation of western political economies, predicated on progress, presence and the positive, to counter the felt threat when remnants of the order of symbolic exchange bedevil the political economy predicated upon their suppression. Baudrillard's (1990) and Latouche's (1996) argument is that this suppression is tantamount to genocide and without doubt there has been a destruction of the ambivalent cultural forms of symbolic exchange that once existed in Aotearoa/New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

My three discursive topoi of nostalgia testify to on-going annihilation (through the last fifty years) of important facets of culture, language, religion, health and economic existence integral to the Maori environment of symbolic exchange. These texts also delineate the loss of cultural and environmental qualities and existences denoting a form of symbolic exchange still evident in the close, semi-rural communities of 1950s' Pakeha girlhood.

Today, nostalgia in simulated form continues to be sentimentalised. In the postmodern consumerist world, however, the threats constituted by embodied nostalgia are more insistent than ever as a challenge to the coded logic underpinning the political economy of the sign. This claim is based partly on observing how hyperreality so desperately condenses and digitises all the facets of nostalgia it encounters. It is also based partly on the observation that embodied nostalgic practices are utterly 'other' to the logic of consumerism and sign value. Sign value and fractal logic regurgitate nostalgia

that belongs more properly, to the order of the symbolic), endlessly proliferating the distinctive signs of nostalgias that circulate within a logic of positivised difference: of presence and identity. Because nostalgic acts and feelings are so symptomatic of the genocidal acts generating irrevocable loss, their very foreclosure by current totalitarianism must be profound and importunate.

## **The Second Thesis**

- The second thesis asserts that nostalgia generates a precise form of gender analysis that seriously problematises the experience of women's lives in postmodernity.

This claim rests on Grace's contention that it is important to historically situate contemporary gender analysis within the present consumerist era. In her argument, to develop gender analysis today requires a Baudrillardian kind of scrutiny of the very nature of meaning and reality underpinning construction of such things as simulated nostalgias, and confront "the myriad of singularities that remain irreducible to codification, models and simulation" (2000: 191). If nostalgia generates the critical distancing required for us to be aware of the irrevocability of the losses that have occurred in New Zealand in the last decade, it must be claimed that the discourses of nostalgia chart what it means to be being gendered female in this milieu. As Haraway points out, contemporary scientific and technological systems assume practices of commensurability radically alien to "a female symbolic" (1995: 55-6). To be aware that technologically-aided simulations of experience have replaced the reality of beautiful

memories of an active lively girlhood is to underscore awareness of what is at stake in contemporary existence in order to serve the dictates of the technological world. A female symbolic is patently impossible where the exchange in signs and the profusion of images means that gender itself is figured as “transsexual”, in accordance with the pattern of the fractal. “In other words, [as well as being] politically indifferent and undifferentiated beings, [we are] androgynous and hermaphroditic ...transvestites of the political realm” (Baudrillard 1990: 24-5). According to Grace, Baudrillard’s use of these terms constitutes his observation that the simulation of sex/gender difference (the self-replicating endless repetition of the self-same) has replaced the intense ‘otherness’ of sex/gender (Grace 2000: 129-132).

From this perspective, concepts of liberation and justice, which powered feminist politics from the 1960s to the 1980s, are now generated in terms of commodity and, as pointed out in the Introduction, oppositional politics can no longer be understood as the key impulse of social change. We require scrutiny of the mutually dependent relationship between economic value and semiology. We also need to consider how this relationship strictly manipulates the cultural range of what can be articulated in the west.

Today in Aotearoa/New Zealand, a liberal Western democracy, feminists might reflect with satisfaction on the liberation, personal and political freedoms and changes in social awareness of gender oppression that have occurred in the last fifty years. Women’s and feminist studies departments and texts have inaugurated political critique and scholarship and women are now firmly positioned within heterogeneous systems such as corporate culture, the arts, the media and politics. Radical and post-structural feminisms

alike continue sustaining (what seems to be) an emancipatory trajectory critiquing New Zealand's heteronormative and racialised social order.

The discourse of psychology has arguably been central in such social change and has, since the 1950s, gradually supplanted religious authority by regulating how emotions such as melancholia, nostalgia and regret are understood. The tendency is for New Zealanders to think we are free from religious and political authority and, looking to maximise lifestyles and fulfil ourselves as persons, we have ostensibly become free agents of choice, self-actualisation and self-esteem. A feminist model of morality and ethics aligns women within the political interests of liberal democracy by stressing responsible individualism and autonomous selfhood. The feminist vision of having women occupying the highest posts in the land has been accomplished in the last decade, as (at the time of writing) the monarch, the leader of the Maori King movement, the Governor General, Chief Justice, Prime Minister, Attorney General and Leader of the Opposition are all currently female.

Basing my analysis on Baudrillard's work, however, suggests that today the code underpinning the psychosciences and the political economy of the sign are neutralising distinctions between masculine and feminine, reality and illusion, child and adult, past and present, Maori and Pakeha by reconstituting "differences" in simulated form. Devoid of the contradictions and conflict that marked historic capitalism, the present liberal order of human rights and a market economy is transpolitical, unreal and speculative, in short "no longer modern, but post-modern" (Baudrillard 1992: 36). Distinctions constituting the modern psychoanalytic and literary subject are now blurred and blended together. To conceal this, an apparatus of exchange value or the market law of value and political



economy have appropriated the disparities of the previous systems, which now act solely as a reference for simulation. What is unequivocal is that our feelings of melancholia, nostalgia and regret, and so on, now float in a hyperrealised context.

The fluidity, flexibility and heterogeneity of this environment takes the momentum out of New Zealand “second-wave” feminist’s prior oppositional tactics promoting justice and freedom from oppression on the basis of gender. The elevated status of a few women might be regarded cynically as merely superficial manipulation, enacted by a government which is fettered by deregulatory market ideology and the notion of minimalist government. Rather than taking feminist pride in these achievements one might have the hollow sense that these women in ‘high places’ are merely symbols of an anti-governmental privatising consumerist ideology. The tragedy would be heightened by awareness that these women’s accomplishments reflect attempts to actualise the very objectives of the feminist movement in 1960s New Zealand of liberty and democracy, which are extinguished by the speculative culture of the media and advertising.

To be precisely situated, this research was designed to try to pick its way around the dialectical terms of subject and object and their corollaries of identity, difference, and female subjectivity. This is achieved by extending the phenomenological theories of Merleau-Ponty to include the type of post-or critical, phenomenological approach advocated by Alcoff, Kristeva, and Csordas. The resulting specificity enabled the existential ground of contemporary New Zealand women’s situated knowledges of nostalgia to be made transparent. Descriptions have been generated critiquing the specifically gendered and racialised properties of the oppressive regulation of Aotearoa/New Zealand culture.

Following Baudrillard's critical strategies, it can also be argued that the articulation of remnants of a once-experienced symbolic realm throws totalitarian systems into relief in important and unprecedented ways. The critical distance gained through processes eliciting nostalgia inevitably means that nostalgia indeed has the potential for ideological analysis demanded by feminist and socio-cultural critique.

In the discourses of nostalgia, this distancing facilitates critique of New Zealand women's experiences and narratives. The sophisticated manipulation evident in the research interview transcripts, and the stories they tell, reveal a pattern of three distinct discourses I have labelled *Home*, *Home-killing* and *Homesickness*. *Home* is the bodily re-enactment through memory and imagination of multiple images of childhood immersion in a type of symbolic exchange. Associated with this is engagement with a multitude of sensations: a sense of wholeness, spontaneity, exuberance, joy, awe and intensity. *Home-killing* is another re-enactment narrating incidents from childhood, but one where the intensity and joy of the prior discourse is swamped by oppressive social structures, with resultant sensations articulated in the vocabulary of discourses of 'psy': melancholia, isolation, grief, pathos, lack of control and outrage.

The final discourse articulates consequent experiences of adulthood. In this third discourse all of the women return as adults to the various geographical scenes where they experienced aspects of a world of symbolic exchange as children. There, they invest substantial energy in attempting to reengage with former experiences and in bodily attempting to regain the immediacy and enchantment they remembered from childhood, often in the endeavour to transfer such feelings and values to grandchildren. This discourse provides the opportunity to witness individual attempts to renegotiate the

experiences foreclosed by contemporary ontological shifts, and to witness the disturbing and bewildering effects of evoking the intensity of a remembered sensation that can only be evoked because its intensity has been suppressed through being reduced to an icon and commodified.

All three metadiscourses are juxtaposed in their postmodern milieu where the women's memories of embodiment are relentlessly generated by digitised models, which heighten the sense that reality is not as it was. This results in the bleak realisation that the forms of culture that enabled the metadiscourse of post-war childhood *jouissance* to flourish are either gone forever or acutely under threat. Particularly Aotearoa/New Zealand ways of talking about symbolic Maori and Pakeha worlds, reiterates that what was once real is now understood as irrevocably lost, at the same time as that which is lost is relentlessly materialised.

We live with the embodied knowledge that now – on radio, video, television, D.V.D. and the Internet – there are simulated, fractal and virtual nostalgias that yearn more profusely and 'real'ly than our personal evocative and embodied nostalgias. Bodily and psychic confusion is created when competent technologies engender the fantasies and memories of homesickness more vividly than the embodied human mind and imagination ever could. These signs of nostalgia proliferate in direct proportion to the need to hide that the world that has always downplayed nostalgia is now extinguishing it.

The simulated childhoods of advertising persistently disseminate play and adventure in all directions, effectively masking the loss of a previous form of childhood. Trees, rivers, seas and bush that marked our sites of play and adventure are the realm of eco-tourism, loggers or property investors. The smells, sights, feelings and sounds of

childhood enchantment and *jouissance* are brought and sold. The guile and violence of children's play is governed by health and safety regulations, and structured into supervised sport, the laptop and play-stations. The survival of childhood itself is also subject to change by shifts in family size and reproduction that are intensely constrained from globalisation. As an example of one more desolate otherness that has returned in the form of disturbed social relationships, Jenks holds that the horrors of child abuse today are a "strike at the remaining, embodied vestige of the social bond" (1996: 109).<sup>2</sup>

Memories of childhood now only have sign meaning in a world in which meaning itself does not exist in a relation of representation. In a postmodern milieu without oppositions we find the refiguring of nostalgic polarities (the subject and object of nostalgia) longing and satisfaction, feminine and masculine, the accessible and inaccessible, fantasy and reality, past and present, age and youth. What in classical psychoanalysis is the longing for the inaccessible *jouissance* of the maternal womb, now reflects a mobility, fluidity and multiplicity of positions; able to construct what psychoanalytic feminists might call the *jouissance* beyond the phallus. This reconceptualisation appears to subvert prior forms of representation, and the phallus appears as an arbitrary rather than a transcendental signifier. This nostalgic plurality however does not subvert or escape the constraints of modern representations of the feminine, but merely reflects hyperreality which continues to formulate gender in relation to the essentialism regulating the phallic exchange standard.

Accumulation and capital now foreclose the symbolic realm, nature and culture are no longer significant, and, as Baudrillard writes "both big financial capital and the means of destruction have been 'hyper-realized' – and both [war and money] are in orbit

above our heads on courses which not only escape our control but, by the same token, escape from reality itself" (1990: 27). Despite the fact that women's position in society cannot be read solely in terms of reproductive function, we must acknowledge Kristeva's argument that women have always been the gender primarily responsible for bringing new life into the world. From this point of view, women are greatly disadvantaged by a regime that values commerce and consumerism over symbolic cultural relationships. The fragmentation of women's psychic reality is characterised by the hierarchies that have replaced the symbolic social bond, hierarchies controlled by entertainment, communications and information technology. The politicised, gendered and racialised oppositions that regulated New Zealand's social and political framework are neutralised as apparatuses manipulate and blur distinctions between the news, life-styles, entertainment, information technology and society. Like other western nations, New Zealand is now a place where the trivial, uninformed, tasteless, and immoral are valorised and remunerated. Where huge advertising budgets shape our desires and wants as our bodies, minds and emotional states are directed into 'wanting' and 'needing' things that are arguably contrary to the requirements of human embodiment. It is increasingly commonplace to give precedence to work rather than social relations, the virtual rather than the embodied. These are all factors that impact upon women's psychical and embodied lived experience. To paraphrase Baudrillard: now there is not even nostalgia. "Nostalgia had beauty... It was beautiful for never being achieved" (1990: 120). Not even that.

Small wonder there is such longing to re-experience the intensity of the challenges, reciprocity and aliveness emanating from the senses remembered from

childhood in a symbolic realm. The implosion of the relations between reality and its representation, which in turn constitutes a positivist semiology of identity/difference, augments the traumatic and disquieting reiteration that unfolds in Discourse 2 –Homekilling. While the concerns of feminist theorists about women’s position in the contemporary west highlight our incommensurability as well as our degraded status, the discourses of nostalgia reveal how emotional, psychological and embodied well-being is possible in remembered kinds of symbolic exchange and as a practice of ongoing critique. Of course societies of symbolic exchange as such cannot be reintroduced. This is not the argument I wish to make. But the engagement of the symbolic as a critical standpoint enables the articulation of their singularities, which reinjects an ambivalence of meaning and unrepresentability into life today. While symbolic exchange was anchored in those societies that experienced gift exchange, seduction as the abstraction of the symbolic has an enduring quality unable to be represented finitely or positively, but able to activate, transform, transverse and circulate around people and things.

The reading of the discourses of nostalgia undertaken here resonates with Astbury’s (1996) line of reasoning that

women’s subordinate position in society and their gendered life experiences contribute to their mental health.... Women predominate in diagnoses of depression, agoraphobia, simple phobia, dysthymia, obsessive compulsive disorders, somatisation disorder, panic disorder and histrionic personality disorder” (Astbury 1996:189,190).

How many of these disorders are western scientific explanations of women’s psyches and bodies reflecting biological and phallogocentric reductionism, which “become lodged intrapsychically and are actively psychogenic”? (p.191). Equally, how many of these disorders are attributable to women’s embodied, intellectual and psychical knowledge of their loss of a realm of symbolic exchange?

The remarkable persistence with which the research participants sought to reconnect with their childhood realm of symbolic exchange in this milieu can also be read according to Kristeva's explication of the Freudian death drive. Like Astbury, Kristeva claims that women more often than men are diagnosed with depression. In her view, this is exacerbated by the way in which the contemporary west is "experiencing a fragmentation of the social fabric that offers no way out from (and may even intensify) the fragmentation of psychic identity that depressed people experience in their own lives.... [In this milieu], culture is a precious, yet highly volatile resource" (Kristeva 1996: 80-1).

Kristeva claims that Freud's text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) reveals that Freud's conviction that the pleasure principle dominated psychic life was augmented by his belief that the purest drive was the death drive. Kristeva finds it helpful in treating melancholia to consider Freud's contention that "[w]hile *Eros* means the creation of bonds, *Thanatos*, the death drive, signifies the disintegration of bonds and the ceasing of circulation, communication, and social relationships" (Kristeva 1996: 79). The disintegration of bonds constitutes what Kristeva calls a "melancholic-depressive composite", because both melancholia and depression are stamped by "a *divestment of social bonds* and the ceasing of all relationships [and] a *devaluation of language*" (p.80). If the death drive signifies the "disintegration of bonds and the ceasing of circulation, communication, and social relationships", then clearly the remembered childhoods are not that. Rather they remember a richness of "circulation, communication, and social relationships". It is the nostalgic experience itself which is a form of "death drive" as regressive impulses retreat from the pain of the hyperreal. In Kristeva's words: "No,

we're not interested in your society, your activities, or your language. We are different from that; we do not exist; we are dead" (p.80). As I have argued throughout, nostalgic practices cannot be only subsumed by Freudian conceptualisation. There is much more to nostalgia than that.

### The Third Thesis

- The third contribution considers the possibility of rethinking nostalgia so that expanded interpretations might be taken into account.

This section argues that reinterpreting practices of nostalgia will potentially relieve us of any one particular way of conceptualising nostalgia. The cogency of rethinking nostalgia in a way that avoids reliance upon dichotomies of difference is that it provides a method of theorising precisely embodied descriptions that are not able to be hyperrealised by higher order general systems.

Theories of re-volt and ex-centricity, as well as Latour's critique of modernity substantiate the reading of nostalgia undertaken here.<sup>3</sup> Kristeva's 're-volt' (1998) and Baudrillard's 'ex-centric' practices (1998) reconnect us with an embodied re-enactment of the innumerable singularities of symbolic exchange. In women's memories of girlhood, such singularities echo Kristeva's *semiotique* or Cixous' *écriture féminine*, practices asserting memories of a kind of 'female symbolic'. Engaging with those memories is itself a practice valuing those things that are life-enhancing over technologies activated within particular social eras and forms to generate banality. It is an



act of revolution to re-enact *jouissance*, spontaneity and freedom in a milieu where tightly governed discourses of economic control regulate women's bodies according to consumerist and corporate notions of health, sport and fitness.

As Freud elegantly argues in his essay "The 'Uncanny'" humans have a history of trying to keep things constant and familiar even though human survival has always depended upon the capacity to change to suit our environment. Following this logic, every time we reconnect to embodied remnants of symbolic exchange we reconnect to the ambivalence governing life in the world. Re-volt does not mean clinging blindly to the past but gaining access to the energies and vitality of critical, revolutionary sensations; it is a standpoint from which we can look afresh at the vast polymorphous machine of postmodernity that appears to overwhelm everything. An important element of nostalgic practice as an instrument of critique is that such reassignment confuses any fixed interpretation of nostalgia.

This point is well displayed in the discourses, where the term 'nostalgia' triggers an imbroglio of sensations and stabilises particular memories of the sensations encountered in specific geographical locales and through specific embodied activities. By rethinking nostalgia as equally a phenomenon, a discourse and a critical theory, we can be aware of how nostalgia sparks networks that allow us to critique, imagine, remember and bring into actuality a wealth of singularities.

This expanded interpretation of nostalgia acknowledges the rituals, habits and cultural practices that systematise certain modalities and rhetorical procedures. Techniques of memory, time and spatiality constitute tropes and metaphors. Memories of people, geographical locations and particular values become embodied, categorised and

reiterated. The vocabularies and sensations of *jouissance*, laughter, tears, smell, sound, taste and sorrow are manoeuvred into 'sensational' narrative.

Nostalgic practices such as this connect us one to another with words that mark out tangible interpersonal rather than simulated connections. These networks circulate and define social attachments and link us to real voices, words, sounds, values, habits and techniques of thought, speech and action. We are connected to places and people we know by name and linked to things we have touched, smelt and held as well as things that have touched and held us. By understanding nostalgia as discursive as well as articulated, and as historically specific as well as embodying passion and sensation, thereby animation, beauty and the symbolic bond are returned to life to continuously assert a sense of what Latour calls "reality, language, society and being all at once" (Latour 1993: 89). The amalgamation of nostalgic signs, words, affects and experiences are – in Latour's terms – compatible, in that together they make up the collective networks that attach us to one another while circulating in our hands and defining our social bond by their very circulation.

This allows us to consider how nostalgia brings back meaning in the context of late-capitalism, as it re-animates the sound of a Maori grandmother's voice, the re-enacted 'feeling' of the plop of one's foot withdrawing from mud, the smell of pennyroyal and the sharing of food and hospitality. Nostalgia means the innumerable singularities charting our going back to places where one experienced belonging, the taste of pipis on white bread and the excitement of play. These might sound like very disparate resources but, as we heard through the discourses, the various modalities constituting nostalgia are definitely compatible.

Rethinking nostalgia in these ways acts as a radical critique of the contemporary era by throwing into relief the magnitude of the changes in reality marking postmodernity. Baudrillard's melancholia regarding contemporary culture quintessentially functions as a highly effective technique to promote the survival-value of re-connecting with the world of symbolic exchange. Reinterpreting nostalgia as an embodied and discursive practice of consciousness in the world, as well as a discourse and critical technique, promotes a clear-cut revulsion for globalised systems that disempower the imagination, mind, memory and senses. Such an interpretation has the potential to reinstall an ambivalent form of meaning, and offset procedures of the virtual, the robotic and the hyper-realised.

What underpins the complexity of this way of thinking about nostalgia is its ongoing quality of ambivalence. This nostalgia generates no opposing poles, no ideal meaning, but instead the seductive joy of the chaotic, ambivalent and playful, as well as the challenge to the death. It is not the radical illusion of the simulated reality of childhood, but the unintelligible singularities of the animated body immersed in the world.

In conclusion, this research provides a glimpse into the psychical and embodied cultural phenomenology of being female in the contemporary west, from within the bounds of feminist scholarship. Furthermore, and only in the contemporary world, such scholarship requires recognition of how reality is constrained by the authorities and structures whereby women are allocated a psychology and inner domain. But for greater precision, scholarship must recognise how women's positionality, and our physical and psychical disorders, are contemporaneously regulated by hyperreality.

To be “homesick in hyperreality” constitutes nothing less than the awareness of a kind of taxidermic revivification of what is meaningful and cherished; an almost unendurable assault to our senses, our memories and our humanity. For as the twenty New Zealand women individually revealed, nostalgic female bodies, psyches and theories know, with deep acumen, how hyper-productions of reality mask the exploitation and extinction of finely adjusted environments and meaningful cultures.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>It is a strong claim, nevertheless substantiated by scrutiny of the term ‘genocide’ as a post-war neologism originating in Raphael Lemkin’s text *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, 1944. The invention of the term, coincident with the Holocaust, was an attempt to formalise the terms and parameters of western feelings of moral outrage. However the term not only legally defines the physically observable, temporally concentrated destruction of a people, as in Nazi Germany, Rwanda and Bosnia but also, more comprehensively connotes a range of acts through which the cultural practices establishing a distinctive form of life might be obliterated. In *The United Nation’s Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948) genocide is defined as a

coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destructions of different foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves...disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings [emphasis mine], religion, and the economic existence [emphasis mine] of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups (Lemkin 1944: 79 cited in Danner 1997: 67).

<sup>2</sup> Jenks argues a similar point in the following manner.

We need children as the ...now outmoded treasury of social sentiments that they have come to represent. Our ‘nostalgia’ for their essence is part of a complex, late-modern, rearguard attempt at the resolution of the contradictory demands of the constant re-evaluation of value with the pronouncement of social identity (Jenks1996: 108).

<sup>3</sup> The West has always been “amodern” according to Latour;

[T]he moderns are quite right to want reality, language, society and being all at once. They are wrong only in believing that these sets are forever contradictory instead of always analysing the trajectory of quasi-objects by separating these resources, can we not write as if they ought to be in connection with one another? (Latour 1993: 89).

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Kaye Cederman

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**Research Project Title: A critical analysis of the discourse of  
'nostalgia' and the impact of this upon the construction of female  
subjectivity in New Zealand over the last fifty years.**

## **INFORMATION SHEET**

You are invited to participate in my Ph. D. research on the way women's 'identity' or sense of 'self,' has been constructed in New Zealand over the last fifty years. I am especially interested in the ways in which 'nostalgia' influences our experience of the present. To do this, I want to explore the ways participants think about 'nostalgia', and how these memories relate to how you understand yourselves and your lives now. Your 'identity,' 'self,' or how you see yourself as a person, may well have changed many times over the course of your lifetime. This project will particularly ask about your specific understanding of 'nostalgia', your experiences of 'nostalgia' and the impact of 'nostalgia' on your present life.

Your participation in this project will involve a tape recorded interview with me either at your home or somewhere which suits you. I will make the transcript of your interview available for you to check for verification before my analysis proceeds. If requested, I will also provide each participant with a summary of my completed work which will include both material from the interviews and my analysis of this.

The results of the data may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of the data gathered in this investigation: the identity of the participants will not be known to any person other than myself. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the tapes and transcriptions will only be accessible to myself and, if necessary, and only with your consent, the supervisors of my research Assoc. Prof. Livia K. Wittmann and Dr Victoria Grace of the Feminist Studies Department of the University of Canterbury. Pseudonyms will be used at all times after the initial interview and any details which may directly identify you will not be included. I will consult you about this if I am uncertain.

This project is being carried out by Kaye Cederman who can be contacted at (03) 358 7764. I will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project.

## CONSENT FORM

**A critical analysis of the discourse of 'nostalgia' and the impact of this upon the construction of female subjectivity in New Zealand over the last fifty years.**

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject and I consent to the publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

**Signed**.....

**Name**.....

**Date**.....2.2.98.....

.....



## Appendix 3

# The New Zealand Film Centre looks back on 70 glorious summers

**W**HAT is it about summers past? This summer might be good but the long-gone summers are always better. Or so it seems.

The cloudless, careless, endless summers when you woke to blue skies and the back doorstep already hot from the sun; when the blackberries were sweeter and the water was always warm.

It may be an illusion, but a visit to the Zealand Film Centre in Cable St, Wellington makes it easy to believe. Seventy years of glorious summers are there for all to see.

In an exhibition, *Tiki Touring Tipi Haere*, curated by New Zealand Film Archive staff, Kiwi summers have been harvested in photos, news reels, home movies and old television clips and advertisements.

The fashions and fads, the getting away from it all, the backyard frolics. Christmas dinners, pinnies and shelling peas. Picnics at the beach. Sand and surf, summer chores, mowing the lawn, clothes on the line (they say a lot), painting the roof. All the fixing-up and catching-up. Floppy sunhats, print dresses, woollen togs – the sort that stretched with water, dragged with sand and smelled of wet sheep as they dried.

Thick rubber bathing caps with chin straps. Khaki shorts. Picnicking males in long trousers, collarless shirts, waistcoats and white panamas. Ice creams and cigarettes. Canvas deck chairs, boiling billies and drifting smoke from thermos. Company picnics, egg and spoon races and summer camps for “young ladies”.

A passing parade of cars – the Ford Zephyr of 1965, the 1930 car with a wartime gas converter and the South Island family with the remarkable wooden homemade fold-up trailer caravan (circa 1930). *The Fourmylar* (hit Kiwi pop group of the sixties) sings – and this is true – *We're all going to Otaki for a National Film Unit Pictorial Parade*.

The trivial made momentous. Here is yesterday's New Zealand summer captured forever through the eyes of amateur and professional filmmakers.

Many of the images were once tucked away in shoe boxes and browning albums or languished in family attics.



Now they are a valuable historical resource, specially from early in the century. In the days when there was little professionally-produced film, home movies provide the only moving record of how life was.

Rachel Healy of the archive staff says many of the films from which clips and stills have been taken have been handed to the archive for safekeeping. She says, “The archive likes to encourage this as a way for people to preserve a wonderful resource.”

The archive copies film on to new film stock or video so that often the original no longer has to be touched and can safely be stored in the vault. Families can have a copy. However, the archive does not take ownership of the material. It is merely the custodian and the originals are always available to the family.

Rachel says, “Often people don't want the old film at any rate and it is sitting at home deteriorating. The archive now has the facility to dub the film on to a digital video which really makes the most of the qualities.”

Archive staff say they went through hundreds of films to find images for the display, the reward perhaps only one definitive shot, but an image so good it just had to be used.

Some family films are of almost professional quality. A D Lambourne, an Auckland semi-professional photographer, recorded his family, their growing family events and holiday times. The movies span the years from the thirties to the fifties and are interspersed with carefully made titles and captions.

Says one: “Sunny days were happy days, spent just having fun.”

And so they were. Weren't they?

*Tiki Touring Tipi Haere* is free to view at the Film Centre, Cable St, Wellington till the end of February.

Above: picnic in paradise. The McComish family enjoy the summers of the early 1950s

Left: in quiet solitude, believed to be the father of Jack Johnson, former mayor of Whangarei, who took this picture

